THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF AMERICAN MILITARY COMMISSARIES



Vol. 1

The Defense Commissary Agency and its Predecessors 1775 - 1988









ILLUSTRATED HISTORY of AMERICAN MILITARY

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COMMISSARIES

The Defense Commissary Agency and its Predecessors, 1775 - 1988

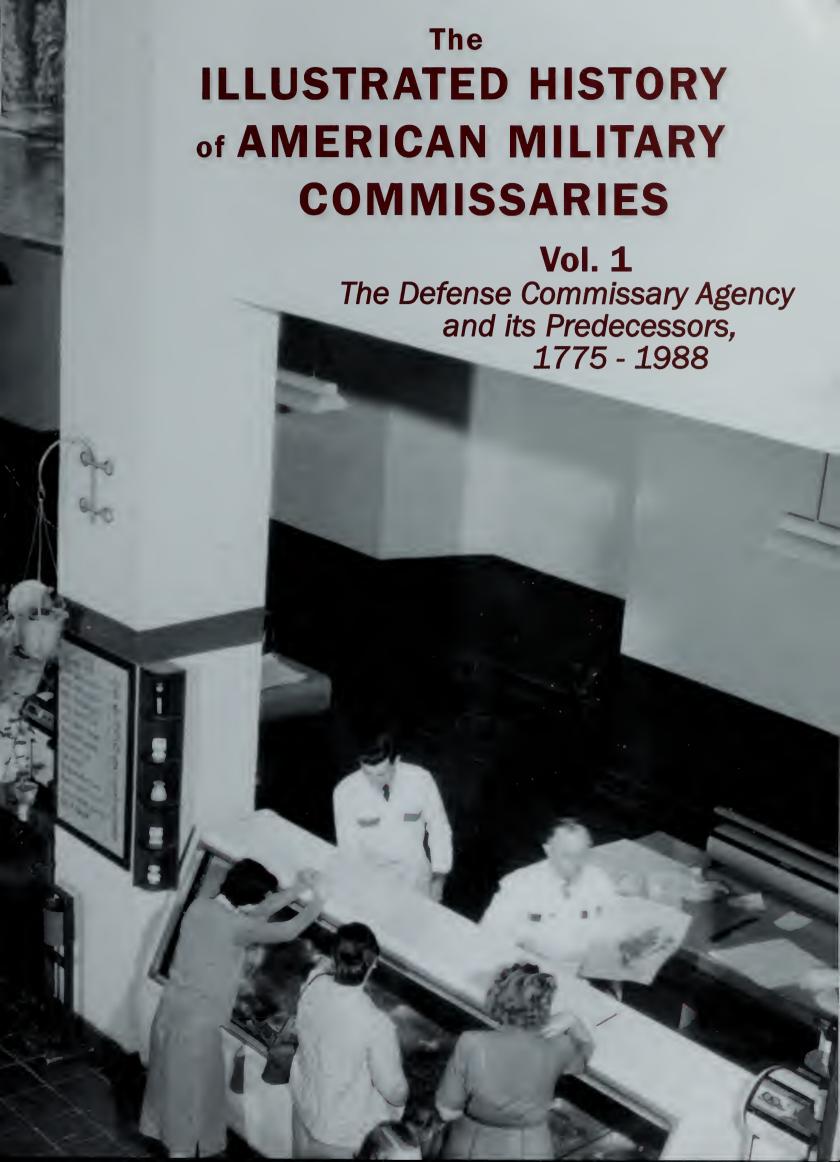


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Any opinions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Department of Defense or the Defense Commissary Agency.







THIS PAGE: The store at Sagamihara, Japan, 1958. U.S. Army Quartermaster Museum

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Soldiers at a makeshift commissary somewhere in France, 1918. For many years, the term "Sales Commissary" was used to distinguish the stores from "Issue Commissaries." National Archives

INSIDE COVER: The store in Contrexeville, France, June 26, 1918, U.S. Army Signal Corps photograph, National Archives

PREVIOUS PAGES: The commissary at Munich, Germany, 1954. National Archives

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1999: 'PLEASE, DAD?' Marine Staff Sgt. Shane Studer, his wife, Jenny, and son, Jake, shop at the Fort Lee, Virginia, commissary. DeCA photo: Pete Skirbunt

FOREWORD

T IS WITH GREAT PRIDE, inspired by the efforts and accomplishments of thousands of people over the course of 233 years, that I present this book to the military community, the American people, and all commissary customers and employees around the world. It is the first comprehensive history of the four major services' sales commissaries ever published.

As readers will discover, the story is fascinating, complex, and inextricably tied to the histories of agriculture, business, economics, marketing, technology, the United States itself, and its armed forces. Since 1775, the armed services have been providing subsistence for their personnel. Since 1867, the services and their commissary organizations have supplemented the official rations by operating stores selling at-cost groceries to military personnel and their families. Commissaries have operated at more than twelve hundred locations, in fifty countries—from Peru to China, from the Philippines to Ethiopia, from Saudi Arabia to the Azores.



Today, there are more than 250 stores around the world, administered by the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA). The agency's efforts are focused on providing an excellent benefit, worthy of those who risk their lives to protect the United States and the principles upon which this nation was founded.

Commissary facilities and methods developed parallel to the American grocery industry, aided by technological innovations. Their burgeoning stock lists were made possible by new food products, developing methodologies, and innovative packaging techniques. Long recognized as one of the military's most valued benefits, commissaries today save their customers an average in excess of 30 percent, when compared with local civilian-sector grocery stores. That figure becomes more significant as food prices "outside the gate" spiral upward, making visits to the commissaries increasingly worth the trip.

I strongly believe the commissaries' best friends are those customers, employees, and legislators who are well-informed about the benefit's development. Anyone working for, or shopping at, the commissaries should be aware of the stores' long heritage, how fragile the benefit is, and why commissary advocates have frequently had to defend the benefit's existence. Time and again, the facts have confirmed the stores are worth the expenditure of taxpayer and surcharge funds.

Today, DeCA continues the best of the procedures and traditions established by its predecessors. It works to maximize customer service, makes detailed plans for the future, and strives to improve every facet of its operations while remaining a careful steward of taxpayer and surcharge dollars. It is also dedicated to supporting its employees on the job and at home, taking good care of them so they, in turn, can take care of their customers. These ongoing efforts, historically rooted in the commissary practices of the last three centuries, will help preserve the benefit far into the future.

Because of the potential positive effects of these goals and practices, as well as the commissaries' own long record of success and improvement, I'm sure we will continue to build upon our legacy of success and improvement. By 2017, the 150th anniversary of modern commissaries, we hope to publish an updated edition of this history that will, no doubt, chronicle a continuing story of success and service to the American military community.

PHILIP E. SAKOWITZ JR.

Director and Chief Executive Officer Defense Commissary Agency June 2008



'So, what are military commissaries, commissary stores and subsistence stores?'

COMMISSARY, noun, plural COMMISSARIES.

(1) U.S., a store that sells food and supplies, esp. in a military post. (2) U.S., a dining room or cafeteria, as one in a motion-picture studio, factory, or college. (3) [Obsolete] an army officer in charge of providing soldiers with food and other supplies. (4) (pl.), food supplies.

COMMISSARIAT, noun.

(1) the organized method or manner by which food, equipment, etc., are delivered to armies. (2) the department of an army charged with supplying provisions. (3) food supplies.

SUBSISTENCE, noun.

(1) the state or fact of subsisting or existing. (2) the providing of sustenance or support. (3) means of supporting life; a living or livelihood. (4) the source from which food and other items necessary to exist are obtained.

STORE, noun, verb; plural, STORES, noun.

(1) an establishment where merchandise is sold. (2) a stall, room, floor, or building for housing a retail business. (3) a supply or stock of something. (4) (pl.) supplies of food, clothing, or other requisites. (5) Chiefly British use, a storehouse or warehouse. (verb, transitive) (6) to supply or stock with something. (7) to accumulate or put away for future use (usually followed by up or away). (8) to deposit in a storehouse, warehouse, etc.

COMMISSARY STORES, noun, plural.

(1) establishments at a military post or base that sells food and other items. (2) [obsolete] supplies of food for a military post or unit

— Random House College Dictionary

TO THE READER

HIS HISTORY IS SPECIFICALLY designed to be user-friendly to all readers: commissary employees, customers, serious researchers, professional historians, and curious browsers. While we are aware of the hazards of trying to please such a diverse audience, we believe this history is scholarly enough to satisfy traditional historians, easy enough to use by those seeking quick answers to pressing questions, and visually appealing and interesting enough to keep the attention of all.

We've broken some new ground in organizing this book, so a few comments are in order:

Chapter narratives and chronologies: Each chapter (except the Epilogue, which addresses the future) contains a narrative text and a chronology of key events. References are not included in narratives, but are placed in the chronologies.

All histories address what happened, who did it, and when they did it. But the true value of studying history is in discovering *how* and *why* something happened—that is, finding the connections between events, which are sometimes separated by many years. Since commissary development was linked to diverse military, political, economic, social, and technological events, we included such events in the chronologies, even if they are not always mentioned in the narratives, to provide an overall context of the times in which the commissaries evolved.

The last chapters: The perceived importance of certain events is often relative to their age. Recent events frequently seem more significant than older ones, but that is often an illusion; the passage of time separates pivotal events from those that were a passing crisis or momentary triumph. Some histories over-emphasize recent events, before their lasting importance (or lack thereof) becomes evident. We have attempted to strike a balance by focusing nine of the book's twelve chapters on the 214 years from 1775 to 1988—the years prior to the formation of the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA). Then, recognizing the necessity of including many recent events whose long-range historical significance is undetermined, we devoted three chapters to the period since 1988, covering the agency's development, accomplishments, and projected future.

The images: Photographs and artwork are often worth a thousand words. There is no better way to contrast the commissaries of the early twenty-first century with those of other eras than by providing photos for comparison. We selected the illustrations carefully, screening over thirty thousand photographs, transparencies, and drawings in DeCA's historical files, which include prints and transparencies passed down from the Air Force Commissary Service and the U.S. Army Troop Support Agency. In

addition, we consulted magazines dating to 1920 and visited major archival collections. Most prominent of these were the National Archives, the Library of Congress, the U.S. Army Center of Military History, the Army War College, the Naval Historical Center, the Marine Corps Historical Center, the Air Force History Office, and the National Air and Space Museum library. More photographs came from the collection of *Military Market* magazines given to DeCA by *Army Times* publications. Finally, not afraid of new ways of doing things (and recalling the adage "all things now old were once new"), we accessed Internet photo sources.

Picture portfolios: Despite the book's size, we quickly realized we did not have enough space for all the photographs we wished to use, so we added five picture portfolios, offering then-and-now contrasts on five different themes: *commissary exteriors*, *interiors*, *customers*, *employees*, and *grand openings*.

In choosing the photographs, we strove for a representative sampling of each of the armed services, geographical locations, store interiors and exteriors, sales floors and prep rooms, employees and customers, administrative, warehouse, and sales area personnel, young and old, male and female, married and single, military and civilian, active duty and retiree, officers and enlisted, military members and their families, of diverse races and ethnic groups.

Our final selections were either technically superior, well composed, aesthetically appealing, pleasingly colorful, or simply very interesting. Sometimes we selected the only known photograph of a given location, to make it a part of the published historical record. Many of the photographs have never before been published, while others were previously published many decades ago and have not been seen by recent generations of commissary customers and employees. Readers should find all of these images interesting, and some are quite remarkable.

Credits: When possible, we gave credit on all images to the photographer as well as the donor, artist, or the archives from which we obtained them. If the donor and photographer were unknown, we credited the region, store, or whatever other source provided them. Some individual stores provided wonderful historical views of their facilities. Stores, region headquarters, and DeCA public affairs and corporate communications personnel provided many that were taken after October 1991. Finally, we took many photographs ourselves.

Some individuals granted interviews, and others donated images, magazines, or documents. A few donated entire collections of historic photographs. Since those collections usually depict one location, we could not use everything they gave us, and the donors may be disappointed to see only one or two of their



gifts presented here. We ask their indulgence. Using everything they gave would have over-emphasized one location while ignoring others.

Reference notes: We personally favor the traditional *foot-note* or *end note* styles, but the style that has become increasingly popular—that of listing a short reference within the text—has a definite utility in a volume that is meant primarily for the ease of the users. To be user-friendly we've succumbed to the newer style. Those readers who prefer the traditional style will see that major concepts presented in the text are placed, in abbreviated form, in the chronologies, where the references are given. All references are listed in the bibliography.

The appendices were gradually and painstakingly compiled over a twenty-year period and contain a wealth of information. There were originally twenty-seven appendices, which we cut to eighteen. Anyone with questions beyond what is answered in these pages should contact us; we may well have your answer in one of our unpublished appendices.

Due to information gaps in the database, not all the appendices show complete information. New information surfaces frequently, and this is especially true of the last appendix, which is a listing of every known (or reasonably deduced) location of a commissary sales store since 1867. It is the first such comprehensive list known to exist. An expanded version of that appendix will be published as *Locations Of All Known Commissary Stores, 1775-Present*, containing all known details about each facility. It will be intended primarily for in-house use at DeCA and at various historical archives; outside researchers needing information about specific locations should contact us.

The index is heavily cross-referenced, with convenience to the reader in mind.

The bibliography offers reference to the materials we found most useful, but it should not be regarded as exhaustive or complete, since we discover additional information on a weekly basis. However, this list of sources should serve most readers well, and provides a good starting point for future research.

The sources: Because few people actually recognized how interesting and significant the commissary story was while it was occurring, the records that have survived are not all that could be desired. In consequence, assembling this history has been a challenging, though rewarding, process. For years, individual installations essentially ran their own stores (in concert with the armed forces' services offices), and, as the bases or stores closed, the records were dispersed, oftentimes getting lost or discarded.

Secondary material on commissaries and subsistence operations is often available only in small amounts in sources that focus on a

different subject entirely. Since the reading public's usual military interests are combat, strategy, tactics, weapons, and personalities, few writers have touched upon commissary operations, and fewer still have written books about them. The major exception was From Haversack to Checkout Counter. Published in 1991 by the Army's Troop Support Agency (TSA), it covered only Army stores. Dr. Michael Hucles' research was hindered by a lack of sources on World War II commissaries. Having considerably more time than had been at his disposal, we were able to locate additional material on the 1939-1954 time frame, but there is still much to be learned. Overseas commissaries of the 1940s and 1950s, especially in the United Kingdom, will be the subject of future research.

Missing information: Because the records are so scattered, and there are still gaps in the data, the reader should understand this history is only the first edition, not the final word. We found new information even as we were finishing the final drafts, and we did our best to include everything we found, right up to the day we went to press. One example: Information on the crisis and commissary closures of 1949-1953 came to light just as we were finalizing Chapter 7. Since we could not minimize such important events, a chapter rewrite was necessary. Today, we remain keenly aware that on the day the presses run we might uncover a mountain of previously undiscovered records. Such an event would prompt us to immediately begin revisions and additions for a second edition.

Additional information: Readers needing more information or photographs should contact us at (804) 734-8134 and we will do our best to help. At the same time, if you have documentation or photos in your possession, please help us share it with the world. Contact us through the DeCA Web site (num.commissaries.com), at the phone number listed above, or write to us at DeCA Corporate Communications, 1300 E Avenue, Fort Lee, Virginia, 23801-1800. We do not need hard copy photos; if you wish, scan them (4X6 inches at resolution 300 dpi) and send them by e-mail. We will provide our current e-mail address when you call. If you do not have scanning or e-mail capabilities, call us and we will accept the original print on loan, do the scanning ourselves, and return the material to you.

We hope publication of this first edition will inspire a flood of additional information from former commissary personnel: personal recollections, photographs, price lists, news clippings, scrapbooks, and the like. If a second, updated edition is needed, we look forward to the opportunity to produce it.

Peter D. Skirbunt, Historian Kevin L. Robinson, Editor Defense Commissary Agency November 2008

INTRODUCTION

HE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY of American Military Commissaries is the first history ever written about the retail food outlets located on installations of all four military services to serve military personnel, military retirees, and their families.

For the first time, anyone needing historical or background information on commissaries will be able to turn to a single source that tells the commissary story from 1775 to the present.

Commissaries provide retail groceries to eligible patrons at an average savings of over 30 percent, thereby stretching the military paycheck and encouraging re-enlistment. The stores have been run, in turn, by the War and Navy Departments, the individual installations, the separate services, and, today, by the Department of Defense through the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA). They are partially funded by tax dollars, which pay the salaries of commissary personnel, and partly by a surcharge paid by the patrons to fund construction and renovations. The patrons, in essence, pay twice for their own benefit: once as taxpayers, and again as customers.

These pages tell the story of the commissary benefit's origin, evolution, challenges, and accomplishments, including the commissaries' predecessor organizations in 1775; the first sales to officers in 1825, and to enlisted men in 1867; how "sales commissaries" developed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; what they are like today; and what they may be like in the future.

Commissary history is interwoven with the history of the United States, its military, politics, and technology. Therefore, these pages frequently examine the influence of outside forces upon the commissaries' development, and the reader will likely learn about many things other than military commissaries. Extensive appendices and chronologies, a score of short features, and hundreds of photos enhance the learning experience.

Shortly after I began working for the commissaries in 1986, I discovered that no written histories had ever been compiled about them. There were scattered documents and articles, and plenty of articles in commercial-enterprise media catering to military resale activities, but nothing that brought the whole story together. I later found the absence of a written history had contributed to a wide-spread lack of understanding about the commissary benefit, and this manifested itself in counterproductive ways. I came to believe that a written history needed to be produced to tell the true story of the commissaries: what they are, why they were established, where they came from, and where they are going.

A published history has many benefits. It helps legitimize an

agency's existence by creating awareness and educating key individuals, organizations, and the public about that agency's purpose and accomplishments. It brings the agency's accomplishments to the public eye. It reminds the organization's own people of their mission, and instills a sense of unit pride.

It's not surprising that many civilians think a commissary is the same type of establishment as an exchange. But I was surprised to find that even many people in uniform don't really know what military commissaries are, much less how they function, or how they originated. Even fictional service members don't understand; to the best of my knowledge, Private Beetle Bailey and his pals have never—again, as far as I know—gone to the commissary in the last fifty years, even though they have often been to the PX! Then there were the characters in Sergeant Bilko, a 1996 feature film, who thought a military commissary was like a Hollywood commissary; but such a "commissary" is an establishment that almost anywhere else would be called a dining hall, a cafeteria, or perhaps a refectory.

Causing more confusion over the years have been the multiple meanings and usages of the word *commissary*. Surely, it must be one of the most baffling words in the English language. On a military base a "commissary" is today a retail food store, but in past times it was known as a "sales commissary" to distinguish it from an "issue commissary" where rations, subsistence items, and even uniforms were issued to the troops. "Sales commissary" was also used to distinguish military-run, at-cost retail grocery stores from other departments, offices, and individuals that also had the label of "commissary": the Commissary General of Prisoners, the Commissary General of Supplies, and the Commissary General of Provisions.

In 1867, a commissary was not a *place* at all; it was a *person* in charge of food or other supplies on a military post. Likewise, while *commissaries* today means "more than one military retail grocery store," it used to refer to the food itself, especially when it was in storage, being shipped, or in multiple containers.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, a CSO could be a *commissary store officer*, but the acronym was sometimes used to mean *commissary sales officer*. Either way the individual was a uniformed military officer who was in charge of a sales commissary. But in recent years the term could refer to a civilian, or an enlisted person—before it was replaced with the new term *store director*.

Such confusing circumstances are not new, nor unique to Americans. England's famed Gilbert and Sullivan first produced *The Pirates of Penzance* in 1879, a comic opera featuring a character who echoed the puzzlement of contemporary British civilians by



1995: DAHLGREN, Virginia. A sailor checks prices on frozen juice concentrate at the grand opening of the Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren commissary. *Photo: Pete Skirbunt*

admitting he did not know "precisely what is meant by *commissari-at*," even though he was "the very model of a modern Major-General." He could well have been speaking (singing, actually) for modern Americans.

With such rampant confusion, it should have been obvious that a history was sorely needed. Why did it take so long for one to be written?

Eventually, I discovered some reasons no book had yet been written about the commissaries:

First, commissaries were generally not considered "historically significant" by either the general public or the military community. This was especially true when the stores themselves were pretty unglamorous: tiny, poorly lit and poorly ventilated, makeshift stores placed inside whatever old structures happened to be available.

Second, since commissaries had been run by the services, and by the individual installations (and the services squadrons on those installations) before that, their records were scattered. Records were at the stores, in installation historical offices, in a variety of archives, or in record holdings of various major commands. There were hundreds of possible locations, but many of the bases had closed. There was no telling where those records had gone.

Third, since commissaries in 1986 were still run by the separate services, any written history undertaken by a historian working for any one of the commissary services would focus on that one service while ignoring the others. In fact, in 1991 the Army Troop Support Agency did publish a history by Dr. Mike Hucles: From Haversack to Checkout Counter: A Brief History of the Army Commissary System. It was a piece of history in and of itself, since it was the first book ever to be published about any of the commissary services. I used it as one of my original sources, and a lot of the original background study for the present volume began with Dr. Hucles' book. But it only addressed the Army stores; the other services' commissaries were not mentioned.

Fourth, until 1986, commissaries were busy concentrating on the daily business of selling groceries and providing customer service. Compiling, writing, and publishing a history was not a priority. There was no time and little inclination to even consider writing a comprehensive history of the stores' operations. However, mirroring the armed forces they served, the story of the commissaries is replete with tradition, heritage, lineage, and lessons learned. Thus the history of the commissaries is a story worth telling.

Hopefully this book will help foster a better understanding of the commissaries, since they may well be the most important (and certainly the most misunderstood) non-pay benefit remaining to the military community. This history is meant for civilians as well as those in uniform, for members of Congress and officials at the Pentagon, and for all interested people from Main Street, USA, to U.S. military bases around the world.

The book is meant for those who work in the commissaries, as well. It is especially important that the people who deliver the benefit gain an appreciation for the heritage of the mission they carry out every day, around the world. For the first time, commissary employees are now able to turn to a book with a sense of pride and know, "This is what I do. I'm part of this. My organization performs a valuable service to the nation and has done so for a long time."

Their full story spans four different centuries, involving thousands of employees and millions of customers at hundreds of locations around the world. The stores in their modern form originated as a direct result of the Civil War, which crystallized the issues regarding retail food sales to the Army. During the war, enlisted men had often been poorly served by civilian retailers, many of whom often overcharged, provided goods of poor quality, or both.

Following a war that had, among other things, ended slavery—and thereby diminished class distinctions in the United States—Congress considered it inappropriate that enlisted men should not receive the retail privileges their officers had already enjoyed for four decades.

From their inception, military sales commissaries were a remarkable idea. No other military organization in the world is known to have provided for its personnel in such a fashion. The practice was distinctly democratic and proudly *American*.

Finally, readers must understand that history is *not* a thing of the past. It's not a matter of "history *was,*" but rather "history *is.*" Everything that exists today is the result of all human history. Everything we are today is the result of *everything* that came before. That means history is the study of events that *still affect us.*

Mr. Kevin Robinson, this book's editor, and I both know we have not told the "complete story." There are far too many details, and far too many individual stories, to make such a thing possible. Still, we have attempted to represent the many facets of the story, and we expect that after this book is published, we will hear from many people who have photos we have never seen before, or information on topics we neglected. We look forward to constructive criticism, because we're always eager to learn more, and we hope to include all newly acquired knowledge and photographs in the publication of an updated second edition.

Dr. Peter D. Skirbunt DeCA Historian, November 2008



EARLY 1960s: THE WAY WE WERE. More than forty years ago, cashiers ran electric cash registers, fingers flying over the keys as they tallied the price of every item by hand. While these were a far cry from modern scanners, at least the cashiers had the luxury of being able to sit while working. Often the cashiers had to mentally figure the change, as few registers did that job for them. Other things have never changed, however: Parents still insist on letting their children ride in the shopping cart, although it is against all safety rules. But at a time when most stores did not allow children to walk around inside the store, some parents had little choice but to bring the children along, placing them in the cart for safekeeping. This photo was taken at Fort Eustis, Virginia, sometime between 1957 and 1963. DeCA historical file

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ANY PEOPLE HAVE contributed to this book, and every contribution was welcome and valuable. Military and civilians, active-duty and retired, historians and collectors of memorabilia have given all types of information, documents, photos, and mementos to this effort to preserve commissary history. Most of these donors were connected with the commissaries, and wished the agencies or stores that employed them (or their family members) to be remembered: the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA), the Air Force Commissary Service (AFCOMS), the Marine Corps Commissary Office, the Navy Resale Services Support Office (NAVRESSO), the U.S. Army Troop Support Agency (TSA), and hundreds of individual stores.

As is so often said in book acknowledgements, there have been so many contributors over the years, I am reluctant to mention anyone specifically because I might neglect someone. But so many people have been of help, I owe it to them to make a valiant attempt:

Chief Operating Officer Richard S. "Rick" Page and DeCA West Director Scott Simpson gave their enthusiastic endorsements to this project. Patrick B. Nixon, DeCA's former director and chief executive officer, provided personal, candid insight into the operations of DeCA, the Troop Support Agency, and the Marine Corps commissaries. Maj. Gen. Michael P. Wiedemer (U.S. Air Force, retired), former DeCA director, provided critiques that were always constructive, insightful, and beneficial during the book's early stages. Important insights also came from former DeCA Directors Maj. Gen. John P. Dreska and Maj. Gen. Richard E. Beale Jr. (both U.S. Army, retired), and from retired Army Col. William Flanagan, DeCA's first chief of staff, who was instrumental in the agency's formation. I am also very appreciative of the interviews given, and wisdom offered, by retired Air Force Major Generals Charles E. Woods and M. Gary Alkire, former commanders of AFCOMS; retired Army Brig. Gen. Charles E. St. Arnaud, former director of TSA; former deputy to the AFCOMS director, Frank Derby; former DeCA deputy and CEO Charles "Charlie" Wiker (colonel, U.S. Army, retired); and former DeCA and AFCOMS chief engineer Walter "Walt" Winters (brigadier general, U.S. Air Force Reserves).

Unfortunately, several key commissary people are no longer with us, and I am very sorry they did not live to see this book's publication: the late Air Force Major Generals Daniel L. "Danny" Burkett, George C. Lynch, and Robert F. Swarts, all of whom were AFCOMS commanders, and Anthony "Tony" DeGaetano, former director of commissary operations at NAVRESSO. Burkett had been AFCOMS' first commander, and had the challenge of getting the agency off the ground; Swarts was the last, and had faced the difficult task of keeping that organization functioning

while the transition to DeCA was taking place. Later, he led the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES). Lynch's keen insight enabled him to make several remarkably accurate predictions. DeGaetano stayed with the Navy's exchanges (NEXCOM) when DeCA was formed, but remained a steadfast friend of the commissaries, and was of great help to me. I know all these men would have been pleased to see the history of the commissary benefit, for which all of them worked so hard, finally chronicled in book form.

Providing information on the Marine Corps commissaries were Joe Jeu, who formerly headed the Marines' commissary branch; Cecil Saunders, who worked with the Marine stores and the Army's Troop Support Agency before coming to DeCA; and Mattie Davis at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, who gave me access to the Marines' commissary records. The staff at NEXCOM's public affairs office contributed information on NAVRESSO's commissary awards.

A half-dozen people have contributed proofreading skills, tactfully (usually) pointing out sentences that made no sense, misspelled words (often, words I haven't misspelled sense the third grade), and typographical errors, and offering encouragement as well as suggestions for re-wording. Deserving special mention are Octavia Bowman, who retired from the Fort Lee Public Affairs Office, only to have me dump an eight-hundred-page manuscript on her desk; Bill Sherman, DeCA's general counsel, who somehow found the time to go through the entire text and make excellent suggestions for improvement; and Paulette S. Watson, retired director of publications at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia, who voluntarily read the whole thing twice, and provided valuable assistance by helping to edit the large and detailed index.

Members of DeCA's office of corporate communications made numerous contributions. Without the support of Jay Hudson and Kaye Kennedy, this book could never have been written. Flo Dunn provided not only support, but all sorts of information, especially her perspective on what life was like for a Women's Army Corps (WAC) officer in Vietnam who had no access to a commissary. Rick Brink, Herb Greene, and Bonnie Powell contributed many recent photos, and Mike Cerny provided graphics support, the book's cover design, charts, and maps. Lynda Valentine provided valuable, accurate, and timely proofreading as we neared completion. Shannon Glisan sorted and scanned photographs, transcribed interviews, and assisted in proofreading the earliest drafts.

The DeCA regions' public affairs representatives have for sixteen years provided photos and pertinent information on individual stores. They were Kay Blakely, Debbie Brackett, Ann Brown, Sam Cagle, Marian Edlow, Lowell Farmer, Carole Ann Fowler, Denise Gomes, Cherie Huntington, Ray Johnson, Nancy O'Nell, John Ryan, Connie Tallon, and Gerri Young.

Dozens of store directors, commissary officers, department managers, store workers, and administrative assistants have sent photographs, documents, and sales lists. I especially wish to thank those I have never met in person, at stores I have never visited, who have trusted me with their memorabilia and mementoes. Much of this material is pictured or referenced within these pages; I have quoted and credited these donors on the pages on which their contributions appear.

Special tips of the hat go to former Cairo store director Ronald Vickerstaff (now at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey) and Cairo store administrator Mohamed Abou El Enein; Carlisle Barracks store director Larry Hoover; McGuire Air Force Base store director John Zoubra; Terry Batenhorst, presently DeCA's director of operations in Europe, but formerly director at several stores, including the one at Mallonee Village; Gene Rice at Naval Base San Diego; and Alan Skaw, who shot some excellent photos of the store at the Coast Guard station on Kodiak Island, Alaska. Always helpful when they were in uniform and now in their civilian capacities were Carroll Allred, Benny Harper, Carl Schwetz, Eric Swayzee, and Mike Yaksich; so were Randy Eller, John Sidell, and Ron Smith, particularly regarding DeCA's mission in Somalia.

Probably my most rewarding experience throughout the compilation and writing of this book was being able to include the insights and photographs given to me by many retirees since 1986. I tried to represent each donor at least once, and I'm glad their generosity will finally be appreciated by people around the world. Noteworthy among them are Cal Mullins and Vic Shuey, longtime commissary employees who donated collections of photos from their years on the job. Other former commissary personnel making major contributions were Clayton Olson and the late Don Long, both retired commissary officers from Fort Riley, Kansas; Sam Robinson, retired meat cutter from Dahlgren Naval Surface Warfare Center, Virginia; longtime Kelly Air Force Base commissary officer Dave Barrera; and retired commissary employees Tom and Kathy Fisher, who provided details and photographs of their tumultuous days in Tehran, Iran. Career meat cutter Mike Domitrovich provided a detailed narrative and several fine photographs. Col. Richard Tessier (U.S. Air Force, retired) supplied some details on the Jones Commission. Lt. Col. E. J. "Vince" Vincent (U.S. Army, retired), the former head of the DeCA liaison office, commented on the transition team, as did Vic Spradley and Marvin Beck. Lt. Col. Patrick Dunn, now chief of the services division with the National Guard Bureau, offered details about DeCA's last months in Somalia. Cordell Hopper provided background on the DeCA seal.

Among current employees, Margaret F. "Peggy" Young, who

is still with DeCA, gave additional insight on the transition team, while she and Linda Lewis—both former employees of the Navy system—were instrumental in supplying information about the Navy's commissaries and NEXMARTS. Tom Owens and Arrie Ackerman helped verify store lists in the appendices. Ann Price, supply clerk at the Imperial Beach commissary, who told me of the Camp Roberts Historical Museum, is also remarkably adept at locating commissary photos and memorabilia, including long-forgotten photos of stores in Virginia, California, and Japan, and a tough-to-find Marine Corps commissary patch. When Richard Medina, an information technology specialist in the headquarters' program management directorate, visited Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas, he took off-duty time to find historic Fort Concho nearby, and brought to light an unexplored chapter in commissary history.

People who supplied scintillating details about events at Philippine commissary facilities during the Mount Pinatubo volcano eruption included Dale Bauer, formerly with the Midwest Region at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas; John E. and Juanita Hartling at Rota Air Base, Spain; Ed Heil of Travis Air Force Base, California; Jack McGregor of DeCA's Western/Pacific Region; Bobby Peters, at Fort Bragg's North Post store; Patrick Schnur at Yokota Air Base, Japan; George Shinn from Los Angeles Air Force Base, California; Grover Worsham at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado; and Jake Ycu in DeCA's Western/Pacific Region. Air Force historians who sent superb narratives on various aspects of the Pinatubo disaster were Mickey Russell of the USAF Historical Research Center at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, and Jerri "Dee" Mitchell, formerly with Lackland Air Force Base and now with the University of Texas at San Antonio.

I received input from a dozen people regarding haunted commissaries. While they all vouch for the veracity of their stories, I promised them their identities would remain secret. Nonetheless, I wish to acknowledge their input. Without it, this book's section on commissary ghost stories would not have been possible.

Many people outside the commissary agencies made key contributions. I was especially honored to receive help from Ann Caddell Crawford, who wrote the famous guidebook *Customs and Culture of Vietnam*. Ann and her husband, Roy, gave me specific information regarding the locations of commissaries in Saigon in the mid-1960s, and she graciously told me her personal impressions of one of those long-lost stores. Tom Long, son of Fort Riley's Don Long, sent excellent photos to accompany his father's narrative. Other superlative historical photos came from Evelyn Lewis and Janet Phinney of the Fort Concho National Historic Site, San Angelo, Texas; Christopher Kortlander, founding director of the Custer Battlefield Museum, Garryowen, Montana; and Gary McMaster, curator of the Camp Roberts Museum, Camp Roberts, California.

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Over the last century, hundreds of customers graciously consented to be photographed while shopping at their favorite store. Many are identified in the photo captions, but in particular I want to thank Marine Staff Sgt. Shane Studer and his family, whom I photographed at Fort Lee on two occasions, and Marine Lance Corporal Ralph Wright, whom I also photographed at Fort Lee.

Several commercial enterprise magazines specifically aimed at the commissary marketplace have been published during the last fifty-five years. Together, they make up an invaluable source of historical material on the commissary benefit from 1953 to the present. The oldest of these, *The Cooperator*, and its successor, *Military Market*, were both produced by *Army Times* publications. Special thanks to Nancy Tucker, for many years *Military Market's* editor, who was instrumental in transferring a set of bound volumes of the magazine to my office when the magazine went out of production in 2000. As these pages show, they have been put to

good use: I found dozens useful photos that were last published more than fifty years ago. Also of great help were *Exchange & Commissary News*, first published in 1962 and headed by Murry Greenwald; and *Military Grocer* (and its successor, *Military Retailer*), first published in 1991 by Ed and Loretta Downey of Downey Publications. Thanks to all for their gracious permission to reproduce some of their photographs.

I hope those who do not see their contributions in this book will understand that to have included everything they gave would have resulted in a history double the size of this one. Their donations are now in DeCA's historical files, and may well be used in future editions of this history, in displays, or perhaps in *Vision*, the agency's employee magazine. Certainly, their material will eventually find a home in the National Archives—where it will remain long after we have all become history ourselves—awaiting future historians taking a new look at the commissaries.

This book would not exist without the efforts of Kevin Robinson of the DeCA office of corporate communications. Mr. Robinson edited and designed the entire book. In doing so, he graciously accepted my multitudinous suggestions and "last minute" revisions—and revisions to those revisions—without complaint. He also located many additional photos, drawings, paintings, and portraits, and made all manner of pertinent suggestions and changes. He matched photos and drawings to text, trying various layout schemes to achieve the maximum aesthetic effect. The whole project was much easier because Kevin was not looking upon it so much as a job, but as an adventure; he was obviously enjoying much of what he was doing.

Finally, thanks go to my wife, Becki, and our daughter, Christine, for their support and understanding while the book was going through its final stages of writing, editing, and proofreading. After awhile, the three of us began to compare the project's "last stages" to the last minutes of a televised football or basketball game, during which the seconds seem like hours and the clock stops again and again. Still, they never doubted that the book would be finished, and encouraged me on many an occasion when I began to doubt the project would ever be finished. Thankfully, it turned out that they were right.

Of course, any mistakes or omissions in this history are mine and mine alone. I look forward to correcting any mistakes, and including important information presently omitted, in a second edition, sometime before 2017—the 150th anniversary of the modern commissary benefit.

Dr. Peter D. Skirbunt, DeCA Historian November 2008



The DeCA Seal

The shield and motto are emblazoned in gold and inscribed on a white disk within an azure (blue) circular band edged in gold and inscribed "Defense Commissary Agency" in sable (black) at the top and bearing a sprig of oak and laurel at the base.

The three divisions of the shield are symbolic of the activities of the agency and the recipient of its services. The sun and compass together represent worldwide service. The eagle stands for the United States and the American military. The cornucopia highlights the great resources of high-quality food supplies provided to U.S. military personnel, their families, and retirees.

Traditionally, medium azure is associated with the Department of Defense and its agencies. In heraldic terms, gold denotes excellence, sable for abundance, and red for courage and zeal. The wreath (the sprigs of oak and laurel) denotes strength and distinguished, honorable service.

The colors are also associated with the Air Force (light blue), Army (green, red and gold), Marines (red and gold), and Navy (light blue). The compass can also be interpreted as a star, which, together with the sun, symbolizes both sides of the earth.



The ILLUSTRATED HISTORY of AMERICAN MILITARY COMMISSARIES

Vol. 1

The Defense Commissary Agency and its Predecessors, 1775 - 1988



1

REVOLUTION 1775 - 1800 AND THE NEW NATION

N 1775, WHEN THE EVOLUTION of American military commissaries began, nothing resembling a modern commissary existed anywhere in the world. There were no grocery stores with various departments for meat, produce, and dairy products. Certainly, nothing like a modern supercenter would have crossed the mind of even the wildest visionary.

Technology had not yet reached the point where electricity, refrigeration, packaging, canning, or scanning were possible. Reliable transportation systems were a thing of the future, as were the building materials with which stores would be constructed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

This situation was about to start changing.



WASHINGTON and his men at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, which, more than any other single episode in American history, has come to symbolize the damage that can be done by a lack of proper supplies. During the winter of 1777 - 78, many soldiers subsisted on a diet of fire cake and water. Fire cakes were made by combining flour and water to form a paste, which was placed in a pan over a fire. The outside was charred, while the inside remained soft. U.S. Army Center for Military History

In 1775, the world was just beginning to experience the first rumblings of the Industrial Revolution. That revolution would bring about advancements in technology and transportation as well as the proliferation of thousands of new processes and products.

SHOPPING IN 1775

People who shopped for food and for what we now call *bousebold* and *bealth care* and *beauty* products went to several locations to complete their chore: the farmers' market, the butcher, the apothecary, the baker, the brewer, the wine purveyor. Butter, eggs, and cheese could be had from one of several different farmers at the market. In short, shoppers bought their foods from a variety of people who specialized in one product. This practice of selective shopping made the process time-consuming, but it was the way it had to be done.

For that matter, it was the way it had always been done, so it was not perceived

as inconvenient or as any kind of hardship. A large proportion of the population did not even have to shop. In 1775, most people in British America lived on farms or plantations. These people, whether they were enslaved or free, were part of a societal unit that was largely self-sufficient and could usually produce much of its own food, clothing, and necessities such as soap and candles. Hunting and fishing supplemented the diet, while weekly trips to town would procure those goods that the farm could not produce. Only city people, who were in the distinct minority in 1775, had to shop on a daily basis.

FEEDING THE TROOPS

As a result of this self-sufficient lifestyle, it was second nature for many a man in uniform to take care of himself in ways that are inconceivable today. Troops needed to be provided with meals when they were stationed at a post or aboard a ship, but when an army was in the field on maneu-

vers or an actual campaign, they could get along all right if the army provided them the basics—meat, starch, and drink—in a daily ration. Unfortunately, this support was sometimes a very big *if*.

The rations were plain, simple, and lacking in appeal, but men would supplement them with whatever they could find locally. In peacetime, the men often pooled their money to make purchases from local merchants or farmers. During wartime, if they were in enemy territory, they might "requisition" the goods by foraging in the country and by looting if they were near a town. If they were in friendly territory, they would generally purchase the goods from the local merchants and farmers. Often as not, they gratefully accepted pies and other delicacies given freely by the inhabitants. But if they were high on hunger and low on cash, and the local people were exceedingly

stingy, the men might purloin occasional items—incurring the wrath of the local population.

An army in garrison or in the field had one other source of food and other necessities: the merchants who accompanied the army and sold the men a variety of foods and hard goods. The merchants were just one type of camp follower, a term that had a myriad of meanings, from volunteer nurse to prostitute. In the soldiers' estimation, these food merchants fit somewhere between those two extremes.

SUTLERS AND THE REVOLUTION

Throughout history, there have always been civilians who were willing to make as much money as possible while supplying soldiers and sailors whatever they wanted. In America, those who sold fruits, vegetables, candy, licorice, tobacco, pipes, combs, shoes, boots, underwear, shoelaces, and other luxuries not provided by the Army were known as *sutlers*. This word was of

Dutch origin, and was less than flattering; it meant, generally, "a purveyor of basic services." Some translations say "lowly" rather than "basic." However, these services were absolutely essential in the days when rations were sparse and commissary sales stores did not exist. The so-called luxuries were often items that, though vital to maintaining good health, were not included

in the official ration. In 1775, there was a general lack of understanding on the subject of nutrition, but the men knew what foods they craved, and the sutlers tried to oblige—for a price.

Technically, a sutler was supposed to be someone with a military license, contract, or other authorization to do business with the soldiers. However, in Britain's American colonies, the term described anyone, licensed or not, located in or near a military establishment, who attempted to sell goods to the soldiers, to each other, or to other camp followers. The word *sutling* (or suttling), a pure Americanization, was invented out of necessity, since there was no English word that meant what sutling came to mean: civilians selling, with or without authorization, all sorts of goods, to all sorts of people, in or near military camps.

The history of sutlers working for the United States actually began before the establishment of the new nation. On the evening of the first day of the Revolution—the night of April 19, 1775, following the battles of Lexington and Concord—dozens of local individuals began doing business with the militia surrounding Boston. They were the first of hundreds who would do business with the state militias and the Continental Army throughout the conflict. Some of these people were simply individual citizens eager to help the cause while perhaps making a little cash on the side. Others were self-employed professional merchants, and a few were representatives of larger mercantile operations. Whatever their true nature, all would eventually be called sutlers.

The definition of what a sutler was

IT WAS FORTUNATE for the Army that George Washington became the nation's first president, for he had some understanding and sympathy for the plight of the enlisted soldier. Largely through his influence, an effort was made to provide decent rations.



became blurred in those first hours of the war and remained vague for years. Individuals had long sold provisions to British soldiers stationed in the colonies. Though the situation and the uniforms had changed, the merchants believed and behaved as if it was business as usual. In the spirit of American free enterprise, they assumed the duties and benefits of tending to the military marketplace. Once they were there, it was impossible—in fact, it was undesirable—to get rid of them.

Officers tried to prevent problems caused either by dishonest merchants or dishonest soldiers by granting licenses to a few selected sutlers, and this later became official policy. Only those with officers as sponsors, or in possession of regimental licenses, were permitted to do business inside the camps. In return, the Army required the sutlers to abide by Army rules and regulations and placed them under orders, or at least under stricter supervision than before. Dishonest or otherwise troublesome merchants could be courtmartialed and driven from the vicinity, if necessary. But civilian vendors were not the only concern. Congress also made sure that Army officers did not get themselves into the business of selling goods to their own men.

It did not take the Continental Army long to experience and recognize the good and bad sides of sutlers. The 1776 American Articles of War duplicated what British regulations already said on the subject, limiting hours of operation and the types of goods that could be sold in camp. At times, the biggest problem was simply attempting to control an abundance of people. The licensed sutlers accompanying

the Army sometimes got in the way, especially when the Army was breaking camp or was on the move.

THE FREE MARKETPLACE

Many vendors, licensed and unlicensed, were far more eager to make money than to help the soldiers. There were many unlicensed vendors who peddled their goods outside camp, and they were often a nuisance and difficult to control. Primarily, they were local people who would not follow the Army but were perfectly willing to take advantage of the Army's proximity to make a little money. The Army made some attempts to regulate and even discourage these local citizens, but since they offered different varieties of goods and often had such items as fresh-baked pastries, they were frequently tolerated. Many of their goods proved as important to morale as those sold by licensed sutlers. These unlicensed vendors were the predecessors of the neighborhood stores surrounding modern military bases.

Unfortunately, many unlicensed sutlers and vendors were motivated primarily by making a profit. They openly competed with the authorized and licensed sutlers, and operated everything from food markets to liquor establishments. They did business with the entire military community: soldiers, soldiers' families, licensed sutlers, and one other. Their operation was the free marketplace personified. However, they often did soldiers more harm than good, because of the prices they charged and the quality or nature of their goods.

In this latter regard, the biggest concern was the sale of alcohol. As the war pro-

gressed, Gen. George Washington spent a great deal of time and trouble attempting to regulate its sale and use. He prevented its sale by unauthorized individuals and fixed the prices charged by those who were authorized to sell it. The general had a number of legitimate concerns: frequent intoxication, violence caused by drunkenness, adulterated or watered-down liquor, the health of the soldiers, and vendor profiteering. In view of the trouble the sale of liquor often caused, it is not surprising that when sales commissaries came into being nearly a century later, alcohol was conspicuously absent from the list of authorized sales items.

Since some alcohol was included in the official ration and authorized sutlers could sell it, attempts to regulate it proved difficult to enforce. The best the Army could do was to prevent unauthorized vendors from selling the stuff in camp and to impose price limits on it. It also limited the authorized sutlers' sales hours. Establishments had to close by 9 p.m. and could not open before reveille. They could not be open at all during Sunday church services.

Sutlers were not beyond the reach of military justice. Those who refused to accept Continental currency or who gave change in their own scrip (redeemable, of course, only at their booth) sometimes had their money or their stock seized, and were kicked out of camp. Punishments were far worse for merchants who adulterated liquor or otherwise defrauded their customers. Some found out, to their dismay, that the Army was not reluctant to use both the jail cell and even the whip as a means of enforcement and discipline.

There were other problems. Among the most dangerous was the possibility of espionage. A sales establishment outside the camp could easily harbor turncoats or spies lingering about, blending in with the clientele, and listening intently for news of any kind. Even honest, licensed sutlers in camp posed a problem. Their ability to attract a crowd unfortunately created an excellent, unsupervised place for spreading gossip and rumors.

In April 1783, with the end of the war in sight, Washington established a set of rules

for the sutlers. These were an accumulation of the trial-and-error wisdom compiled during the war, so some of the rules were already in effect.

There was to be only one sutler per brigade. Licensing requirements were stiffened and could be granted only when corps and brigade commanding officers all agreed. Brigade commanders needed to form a committee of officers to look into their sutlers' sales prices and practices.

Policing officers had to report their findings each day. Sutlers were not permitted to sell mixed liquors. Unlicensed sutlers had twenty days after being discovered to get out of the area. Regimental paymasters were not authorized to pay off individual accounts held by sutlers unless the regimental commander approved. Wednesday and Sunday were designated as market days, and Friday as a payday.

BUMBOATS

Services performed by the sutlers were not limited to the Army. The Navy's version of these merchants were the "bumboat" operators, who were allowed to row out to vessels coming into harbors. They sold various items to the men on deck who crowded the railings to check the goods available from each approaching bumboat. Items such as fresh fruits and vegetables were big sellers to the vitaminstarved crews. Scurvy, after all, had traditionally been a plague among sailors. They could also purchase goods that at the time seemed exotic, such as oranges, bananas, pineapples, and lobsters.

The sutlers often overcharged, infuriating their customers and, eventually, Congress. They would gradually put themselves out of business, a classic case of killing the goose that laid the golden eggs.

Sutlers flourished from 1775 to 1867, and from 1867 to 1895 they managed to stay viable on the frontier. Bumboat operators, whose prices were more variable due to competition, would do business with U.S. sailors until the 1920s.

HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS

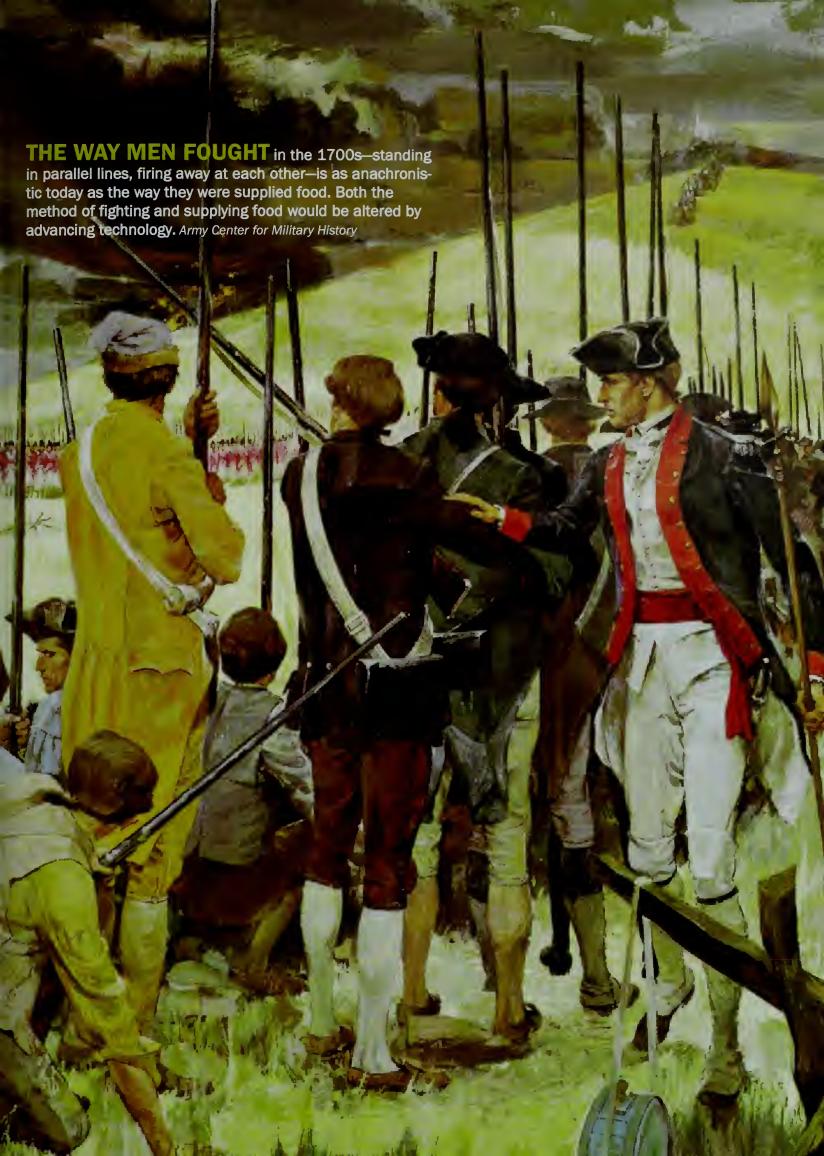
Sutlers, bumboat operators, and the ingenuity of the common military man have

supplemented the feeding of armies and navies from the dawn of recorded history. It could be accurately said that the origins of the modern commissary system actually extend back into ancient times, when noncombatants sold food to military personnel in forts, camps, and ports. Hungry soldiers and sailors were always potential customers for people who wanted to make money. The law of supply and demand was in effect long before modern economists ever defined it.

The majority of the American military's culinary and gastronomical distress is not unique or original. Throughout history, there have been many instances of terrible privations being endured by armies that eventually emerged triumphant. In that regard, Julius Caesar's men eating tree roots in the campaign against Pompey comes to mind. But such tales of heroism overcoming all odds are outnumbered by stories of hungry, demoralized armies deserting their commanders or losing one battle after another. Therein lie the lessons: A hungry army is often a defeated army; keep energy and morale high by properly supplying your people, whether they are on campaign, in camp, or manning a fortress.

The American experience includes the infamous winters of near-starvation at Valley Forge and, two years later, at Morristown. Although they were the sort of experiences that have, fortunately, been rare in America's military, there were plenty of precedents throughout history, as armies seem to have gone hungry more often than not.

Two basic needs have always been met by the interface of civilian merchants with military forces. The merchants wanted profit, and the military wanted tasty, healthful foods. And, while the army could easily go foraging (essentially armed robbery of the local population), it was far easier and safer to stay in camp and have the food brought in. Soldiers were willing to pay for this service, even though traditionally their wages were poor. They often pooled their resources, combining whatever each was able to forage with whatever they could collectively purchase. Often the men went hungry or into debt because the merchants



supplying the food charged high prices.

In 1775, the British army, the colonial militia, and the fledgling Continental Army were all supplied in much the same fashion as ancient soldiers: Official rations would be supplemented by whatever the men could forage and whatever a tagalong civilian merchant offered for sale. This manner of subsistence was the way things had always been; until the technology changed appreciably, this is the way they would remain.

There was no concept of a commissary in the modern sense; the word denoted not a retail function but a supply function. A "commissary" during the Revolution meant someone who helped supply equipment and rations in the field, in camp, or at a permanent post. There were commissary sergeants, commissary generals of stores and provisions, post commissaries, commissaries of subsistence, seemingly all sorts of commissaries. These were titles for human beings, not buildings. "Commissary" could also mean food items, but it never

referred to any kind of grocery sales store. Not yet.

A UNIQUELY AMERICAN CONCEPT

There has always been a need for the services that modern commissaries provide, though until recently the means and the technology were not available to provide them. Commissary sales stores are a very American creation in that they evolved in response to long-standing demands from a vocal minority. Of course, members of the armed forces were a very important minority. Yet some critics saw commissaries as distinctly un-American and anti-capitalistic. One congressional critic in the twentieth century would actually denounce them as "military socialism."

But commissaries were never intended to harm honest businesses or to be an exercise in socialism, Marxism, communism, or any other *ism*. They were nothing more than a typically American reaction to an unjust situation. They were the product of a high-principled, right-minded desire to protect young American servicemen from

dishonest and price-gouging merchants who presumably were without a sense of patriotism, conscience or moral responsibility. Instances of abuse by sutlers mounted as time went on. Finally, avarice and greed—vices that have often gone unnoticed, been ignored, or were even admired in a free marketplace—became markedly undesirable when the welfare of the nation's defenders was at stake.

PLANS FOR FEEDING AN ARMY

Although commissaries during the Revolution were not at all what they were to become, their evolution was beginning. The failures that enraged the Army and became legendary tales of privation and suffering would eventually force improvements.

The Americans of 1775 had decent plans for providing subsistence but lacked the means to carry them out. The Continental Army established a commissarygeneral of stores and provisions for the procurement of goods and a quartermaster general for the transport of those

goods. On paper, the system looked fine. Unfortunately, it worked poorly when it worked at all. It was one thing to let out a contract, and it was quite another to make sure that the contractor acquired quality food in the prescribed amounts, that the food got through to the men who needed it, and that funds were available to pay the contractor for his efforts. The system frequently broke down and never lived up to expectations.

Though there were confusing overlaps of duties and responsibilities, the problems weren't entirely organizational. Some of this incompetence was due to the nature of the state and national governments. The individual states had originated as individual colonies, populated by people with disparate religious, social, and economic views of the world. After 150 years of mutual suspicion, they were difficult to unite under any circumstances. Each jealously hoarded its



GETTING SUPPLIES of all types to the Continental Army posed serious problems. Here, oxen haul disassembled cannons on sledges through the snow near Fort Ticonderoga, New York.

National Archives

own soldiers, money, and supplies.

The nature of the terrain on which the armies campaigned also played a disruptive role. It was tough to supply an army in areas that were largely frontier, with poor roads and worse maps. Even when the roads were passable, supplies couldn't always get through due to the position of the enemy army. Then, if all other conditions were perfect, personalities came into play. Men of high rank and responsibility were also often men of high egos and contrary temperaments. If they clashed with one other, the common soldier suffered for the failure of key officers to properly coordinate and cooperate.

PROBLEMS AND REORGANIZATIONS

Only a third of the American people actively supported the Revolution, and Congress lacked the power, the respect of the separate states, and the money to properly finance a war effort. Therefore, much of the effort for feeding the troops rested with the states. The official rations seldom got through as prescribed, and the armies seldom had enough to eat. At places like Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and Morristown, New Jersey, the men were reduced to eating fire cakes and water (basically, unsalted flour biscuits and melted snow). The famous lament about Congress being "content to starve the Army at pleasure" often attributed to George Washington, but also to Maj. J. Burnett in 1780—no doubt seemed perfectly accurate. Probably both men, as well as uncounted others, expressed the sentiment many times. The situation was maddening and frustrating.

Reorganizations can be tricky things, especially when undertaken in the midst of a war, but that didn't stop the Congress from trying. At the urging of the first commissary general of purchases, Joseph Trumbull, the legislators passed new regulations aimed at more efficient operations. Even before the horrendous winter at Valley Forge, Congress had tried to straighten things out with a Committee of Three, a group of three individuals tasked to investigate what was going on with the commissaries of subsistence. But matters

remained so confused and disorganized that without the alliance with France beginning in 1778, the United States of America may never have come into being. Without the infusion of men from the French army, warships from the French navy, money from the French treasury, and supplies of all sorts—including uniforms and food purchased with French funds—the war may well have been lost.

The Army's method of food procurement was reorganized several times during the Revolution, but the procedures finally became complex and incomprehensible.

The turnover in key personnel didn't help. There were four different commissary-generals of purchases during the war. The first, Joseph Trumbull, experienced the perils and follies of reorganization firsthand. Initially appointed commissary general, he later became commissary general of purchases. After two years in this post, he resigned because of a dispute with Congress over his salary. In fact, before he left, his department was beset with resignations.

These turns of events were hardly the sort of things that built morale and rapport, and they only hindered efforts to get the men their supplies. Ultimately, the less control there was at the top, the more likely the system would get bogged down by fraud, theft, and related forms of corruption.

The same was true for constantly shifting titles, areas of responsibility, and supervision. Upon Trumbull's suggestion, the commissary general position was divided into two departments, the commissary general of purchases and the commissary general of issues. The former later became simply the commissary of purchases, and was ultimately assigned to the Superintendent of Finance in 1781, ending the original commissariat two years before the Treaty of Paris formerly recognized the United States' independence.

FEEDING AN ARMY UNDER THE CONSTITUTION

For awhile it seemed doubtful whether the Army, or the nation it served, would even continue to exist. Under the Articles of Confederation, the government had no power to levy taxes and had no way of maintaining a viable armed force. Only with the ratification of the Constitution in 1789 was Congress able to make sure the nation and its Army continued to exist.

However, rations and the entire system of feeding the troops didn't improve under the new government. For years, the responsibility for contracting for subsistence was bounced back and forth between the Treasury and War Departments. In 1795, the Treasury called the position "purveyor of public supplies," but just three years later, fear of a possible war with France prompted Congress to return control of the Commissary Department to the War Department. Shortly thereafter, American and French ships battled each other on the high seas in a quasi-war that dispensed with the niceties of a formal declaration of war.

It was fortunate for the Army that George Washington became the nation's first president, for he had some understanding and sympathy for the plight of the enlisted soldier. Largely through his influence, an effort was made to provide decent rations. In 1790, the Military Peace Establishment Act backed his efforts, and years of peace afterward enabled supplies to get through to the posts where they were needed. However, the technology of the time necessitated that most of the foods had to be either salted or pickled, limiting the selection of goods available.

In 1794, Congress gave President Washington limited power to increase the daily ration whenever, in his opinion, the circumstances warranted. Congress also augmented the basic ration for troops on the frontier.

At the same time, military and government officials began sanctioning and licensing the individual sutlers they deemed to be the most trustworthy. Sometimes bad selections were made, and the soldiers suffered. When, in 1791, the government contracted with civilian suppliers to provide food to troops stationed at Fort Pitt in Pennsylvania, the results were dismally familiar: fraud, embezzlement, inferior food quality, and spoilage due to the distance involved in transporting the rations.

It was only a hint of worse things to come.

CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS

1775

APRIL 19, 1775 - SEPT. 3, 1783 U.S. Military History: The American Revolution.

APRIL 19, 1775

AFTER the battles of Lexington and Concord, the Revolution's first sutlers began doing business with the militia surrounding Boston. Sutlers were civilian merchants who sold the soldiers everything from fruit to shoelaces, and were the forerunners of modern commissaries and exchanges. As the war progressed, the Army would attempt to regulate these merchants. It had better success with those who were under contract or licensed to do business with a particular regiment. (Holly A. Mayer, Belonging to the Army, pp. 5, 86-87; Jim Hancock, "Army Commissary System" in Troop Support Digest, Summer 1984)

JUNE 14, 1775

U.S. Military History: Congress created the Continental Army.

JUNE 16, 1775

THIS DATE marked the start of organized purchasing of subsistence for the Army, when Congress adopted a plan that included a commissary general of stores and provisions as well as a separate quartermaster general and deputy. This was based upon the British model, which used the commissary general to procure goods and the quartermaster general to transport them.

The positions of commissary general and quartermaster general each paid \$80 per month. The deputy quartermaster general received half that amount. The American Articles of War published in 1775 included Article 23, which said that sutlers were "subject to the articles, rules, and regulations of the Continental Army." (U.S. Congress, Journals of the Continental Congress, 1775, Vol. II, pp. 93-95; Michael E. Hucles, From Haversack to Checkout Counter, p. 127; R. K. Wright, The Continental Army, pp. 36-37. Russell F. Weigley, History of the U.S. Army, p. 51, says "stores and purchases" rather than "stores and provisions," but the former title was applied two years later; Mayer, Belonging, p. 87)

JULY 11, 1775

GEN. George Washington tried to curb the liberties taken by sutlers and other merchants regarding the sale of "rum and other spirituous liquors." (Mayer, *Belonging*, p. 88)

JULY 19, 1775

CONGRESS granted Washington's request for the appointment of Joseph Trumbull to the position of commissary general. Congress left it to Trumbull to determine the sort of department he would preside over. (Wright, Continental Army, pp. 35-37; John W. Barriger, Legislative History of the Subsistence Department of the Army from June 16, 1775 to August 15, 1876, pp. 5-6.) Congress permitted Washington to appoint his own quartermaster general. Congress also appointed committees to exercise fiscal control over the Army's supply departments. Trumbull had authority and responsibility to provide rations for the troops and was directly accountable to Washington. (Journals of the Continental Congress, pp. 190-92; Hucles, Haversack, pp. 5-6, 127. Note: Barriger, Legislative History, p. 2, Erna Risch, Quartermaster Support of the Army: A History of the Corps, p. 1, and Weigley, U.S. Army, p. 51, all say or imply the date was June 19, but that date is incorrect.)

JULY 31, 1775

WASHINGTON signed the order of Trumbull's appointment as commissary general, and directed commissaries to transmit their accounts to the commander-in-chief. (Maj. John A. Porter and John O. Wilson, "Guide for Sales Officers, U.S. Army," in *Quartermaster Review*, Mar-Apr 1946, p. 47) Congress established a committee to determine the most economical method of producing salt. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 127)

AUG. 7, 1775

LACKING A CLEAR set of directions from the American Articles of War, Washington attempted to place more responsibility for appointment and control over sutlers with military officers. He set the rules of camp commerce to ensure that sutlers adhered to military policy. (Mayer, *Belonging*, pp. 6, 46, 87-88)

AUG. 8, 1775

WASHINGTON established a basic daily ration.

(Hucles, Haversack, p. 127)

AUG. 14, 1775

WASHINGTON appointed one of his aidesde-camp, Col. Thomas Mifflin, as the first quartermaster general.

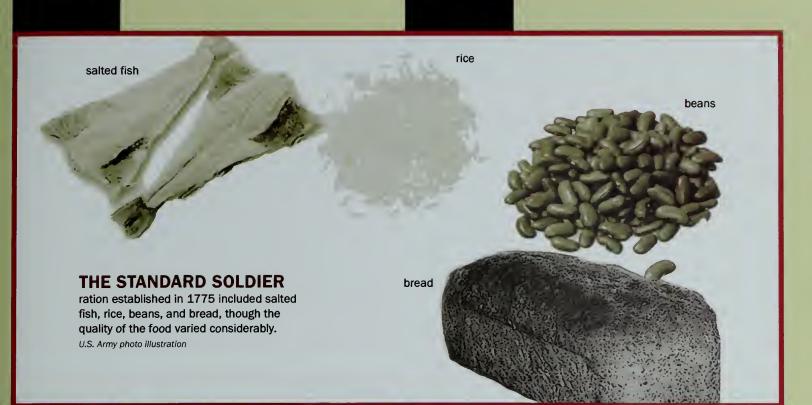
SEPT. 6, 1775

WASHINGTON issued orders to regulate the proliferation of "pretended



Col. Thomas Mifflin

sutlers," or unauthorized merchants who were selling



so much liquor that large numbers of soldiers were frequently intoxicated. (Mayer, Belonging, p. 89)

SEPT. 21, 1775

THE COMMISSARY general was directed to issue rations by rank. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 127)

OCT. 3, 1775

TRUMBULL received instructions to contract for beef and pork, which were to be salted and stored near camps. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 127)

OCT. 13, 1775

U.S. Military History: The Continental Congress authorized the outfitting of a ten-gun warship—the start of the Continental Navy. (Nathan Miller, The U.S. Navy: An Illustrated History, p. 16)

NOV. 4, 1775

CONGRESS approved Washington's daily ration, which consisted of 1 pint milk, 1 quart spruce beer, 6 1/2 ounces dried peas, 1 ounce rice, and 1 pound fresh beef or salt fish, or three-quarters of a pound of pork. It also included soap and candles. (Barriger, Legislative History, pp. 8-9; Elliott Cassidy, The Development of Meat, Dairy and Fish Products for the Army, p. 1; Paul Dickson, Chow, p. 4; Col. Johnnie Dyer, Draft of Staff Report on Subsistence Supply System of the Department of Defense, II-1; Staff Sgt. Randy Goins, A History of Army Rations, p. 29; Hucles, Haversack, p. 127; Weigley, U.S. Army, p. 52)

NOV. 10, 1775

U.S. Military History: A congressional resolution founded the U.S. Marine Corps.

NOV. 14, 1775

WASHINGTON clarified his earlier orders con-

cerning the number of sutlers assigned to each regiment. A sutler couldn't sell liquor to anyone but the regiment to which he was assigned, unless by order of another regimental commander. (Mayer, Belonging, p. 89)

DEC. 24, 1775

A BOARD of officers met at Cambridge, Massachusetts, acting upon Washington's order. It recommended changes in the ration: corned beef on four days per week; salt fish for one day; fresh beef for the remaining two days. Since milk was difficult to procure in the winter, the winter-time meat ration was increased to 24 ounces of beef, or 18 ounces of pork. Six ounces of butter, or 9 ounces of lard, were to be provided weekly. (Cassidy, Products for the Army, p. 1; J. Dyer, Subsistence Supply, II-1)

1776

FEBRUARY 1776

WASHINGTON threatened to punish unauthorized vendors. (Mayer, Belonging, p. 89)

MAY 16, 1776

MIFFLIN ENDED first tour as quartermaster general.

JUNE 5, 1776

COL. Stephen Moylan was appointed quartermaster general.

JUNE 17, 1776

THE NEW American Articles of War included all of the British regulations, including those regarding sutlers and other camp followers, which allowed for civilians selling provisions to the troops.

Congress also resolved, "No officers shall suttle or sell to the soldiers under penalty of being fined

NICOLAS APPERT: Father of Canning

HEN NAPOLEON Bonaparte wanted a reliable way to preserve food for use by the French army and navy, France's Society for the Encouragement of National Industry offered monetary awards to anyone who could develop ways to preserve food in an easily transportable state.

Nicolas Appert, a Parisian confectioner (a maker of candies and cakes), invented the basics of the modern canning process through exhaustive experimentation from 1794 to 1804. Essentially, Appert placed glass jars in boiling water (he used champagne bottles in his initial experiments), then immediately filled them with cooked foods. Knowing that corks were not air-

JULY 2, 1776

JULY 4, 1776

SEPT. 20, 1776

remained preserved indefinitely. The society did in 1810, following it with three later editions, including one published in 1831 when he was eighty years old.

Appert didn't really know the reasons his process worked; microbes and germ theory, and the sciences of microbiology and bacteriology, were not yet known. Only forty years later, with the experiments of another Frenchman, Louis Pasteur, did it become clear: Appert's methods sterilized the jars and killed any bacteria in the food, thus destroy-

> ing any microorganisms that would have made the food spoil or decompose. Pasteurization of milk and other products came about thanks to the prior work of Appert.

> Meanwhile, canning became widespread. Englishman Peter Durand patented the idea of using metal cans rather than jars, which were fragile. Unfortunately, the solder that held the

cans together was sometimes toxic; in England it was common practice to use solders that were heavy in lead content. This practice probably helped contribute to the demise of the Franklin Expedition (see Chapter 2). The threat of lead poisoning remained misunderstood for years; the



NICOLAS APPERT as he appears on a French stamp commemorating his invention. Left: A can of veal from 1824.

Photos courtesy of the Canned Food Information Service

British government did not ban the use of lead solder on food cans until 1890.

Even when proper materials were used, meatpackers sometimes used improper methods in packing their products in cans. The great "embalmed beef" scandal of 1898, in which meat packers allegedly laced their meat products with all sorts of preservatives and even antibiotics, was probably the bestknown instance of canning gone awry.

Today, great care is taken in the use of various materials in which to can a tremendous variety of foods. But many modern consumers are unaware of certain dangers; a can may become damaged through dropping or puncturing, and this in turn can lead to the formation of tasteless, odorless, and deadly botulism. Smart consumers know not to use a can that is swollen, and to avoid the use of products inside dented or damaged cans.

tight, he sealed them hermetically in bottles, and voila!—the food awarded him 12,000 francs upon his publishing a treatise about his methodology. This he

> one month's pay and dismissed from the service with Infamy on Conviction before a Court Martial." (Mayer, Belonging, pp. 13, 87, 94)

U.S. History: Congress declares independence as the British fleet and army arrive at New York.

U.S. History: Congress adopts the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia.

AMERICAN Articles of War enacted by Congress recognized the existence of sutlers and established rules for their control. (Hancock, "Army Commissary System")

COL. Stephen Moylan stepped down as quarter-

master general.

COL. Thomas Mifflin was reappointed quartermaster general.

DEC. 28, 1776

SEPT. 28, 1776

CONGRESS gave a vote of confidence to the commissariat system over contracts for the northern Continental Army. Commissary General Joseph

Col. Stephen Moylan

Trumbull was empowered to obtain rice from the Southern states. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 2)

SEPT. 27, 1776 MARCH 14, 1777 CONGRESS appointed a Committee of Three to "inquire into the conduct of the commissaries, with power to send for persons and papers." These men were **Lewis Morris** of New York, **Abraham Clark** of New Jersey, and **Jonathan Smith** of Pennsylvania. This is the first known instance of Congress taking personal interest in events concerning subsistence. This action set the stage for similar investigations far into the future. (Barriger, *Legislative History*, pp. 9-10)

APRIL 1777

AMERICAN Articles of War were amended to ban sutlers from selling liquor, limited their hours of operation, demanded that they provide "good and wholesome provisions at market price," and forbade officers from profiting either from a share of the sutlers' profits or by charging the sutlers exorbitant prices to rent houses or stalls. (Mayer, *Belonging*, pp. 86-87)

JUNE 10, 1777

ON COMMISSARY General Joseph Trumbull's recommendation, Congress passed new regulations for the Commissary Department, dividing the commissary's purchasing and distributing functions into two separate departments: the Department of the Commissary General of Purchases and the Department of the Commissary General of Issues. Each department would report to a congressional committee. (Porter and Wilson, "Guide," p. 47; Hucles, Haversack, p. 2; Wright, Continental Army, p. 114)

JUNE 18, 1777

CONGRESS retained Trumbull as the commissary general of purchases and assigned him four assistants. **Charles Stewart** became commissary general of issues, with three deputies. At the same time, Congress angered Trumbull and his deputies by changing their compensation from a commission system to straight salary. (Porter and Wilson, "Guide," p. 47; Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 2)

JUNE 19, 1777

AS A RESULT of the previous day's events, Trumbull's department was beset with resignations. In ill health and resentful over the salary dispute, he asked to be relieved of his position. He later said he would not serve beyond August 20. The field commanders lost much of their control over subsistence. (Weigley, U.S. Army, pp. 54-56)

JULY 25, 1777

THE BOARD OF WAR was empowered to contract for beer, cider, vegetables, soap, vinegar, and sauerkraut. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 128)

AUG. 5, 1777

WILLIAM BUCHANAN was appointed as Trumbull's successor as commissary general of purchases. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 2)

OCT. 17, 1777

GEN. John Burgoyne surrendered his British army of six thousand men to Gen. Horatio Gates at Saratoga, New York. This battle proved to be the turning point of the Revolution. It convinced the French that the Revolution could be won and prompted them to ally themselves with the Americans (see entry for Feb. 6, 1778). Burgoyne's surrender was prompted in large part by a lack of food. His army's subsistence supplies from Montreal had been cut off. Burgoyne's men were close to starvation, and had taken to eating their horses.

NOV. 7, 1777

COL. Thomas Mifflin ended his second tour as quartermaster general.

DEC. 19, 1777 -JUNE 19, 1778 THIS WAS the infamous winter encampment at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Like the British defeat at Saratoga, this logistical nightmare echoed the importance of subsistence supply. British control of Philadelphia, New York City, the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, and the beef-producing sections of the middle states made supplying Washington's Army very difficult. Philadelphia butchers and the British army outbid the American Army for what meat was available. When a storm hit in February 1778, the men subsisted for days on "fire-cake and water." Of Washington's 11,000 men, 2,500 died; another 2,000 deserted. (Weigley, U.S. Army, pp. 54-55; Dickson, Chow, p. 6)

1777 - 1783

FOR THE REMAINDER of the Revolution, officials in the Commissary Department placed orders with civilian contractors and left the delivery and distribution to the contractors. Unfortunately, this system did not work well. Congress had absolutely no authority, other than to beg the states to help, but it was too much responsibility and too centralized a problem for the thirteen states. They had thirteen different methods and thirteen different bureaucracies. Maj. J. Burnett complained in 1780: "Congress has left it in the power of the states to starve the Army at Pleasure: Continental Army Administration and American Political Culture, 1775 - 1783, p. 1)

1778

JAN. 26, 1778

DURING the winter at **Valley Forge**, Washington ordered each brigade to hire a sutler, whose liquors would be subject to inspection. Any sutler found to have adulterated his liquor or to have sold it above the prescribed price was subject to discipli-



nary action, including loss of stock. Washington expected sutlers to sell only to their assigned brigades. He also began fixing prices and authorizing sales of certain items. Leaf tobacco and hard soap were among the first items cleared for sale. (Mayer, Belonging, pp. 89, 92)

Though he was wary of sutlers, Washington protected their interests as well as the Army's when he forbade the sale of any liquor by anyone other than an authorized sutler within a seven-mile radius of a military camp. (Mayer, Belonging, p. 89)

It may seem strange that at Valley Forge, more attention would be given to alcohol than to food, but it must be remembered that at the time, strong spirits were believed to have numerous health benefits. At Valley Forge, liquor was apparently one thing the men could still get, at least until February, when the Army was on the verge of starvation.

OFFICERS who distributed public stores were required to take an oath attesting to their honesty and loyalty. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 2)

> U.S. Military History: The United States and France signed a treaty of mutual assistance, friendship and alliance. The French formally recognized the sovereignty and independence of the United States. In June, they would agree to assist the

Americans in the war against England.

MARCH 2, 1778

MAJ. GEN. Nathaniel Greene was appointed quartermaster general.

MARCH 20, 1778 WILLIAM Buchanan resigned as commissary general of purchases. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 2)



MARCH 28, 1778 AUTHORIZED prices, fixed by Washington and the officers commanding brigades, were established for liquor, tobacco, paper, ham, bacon, coffee, sugar, and claret. (Mayer,

Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Greene

Belonging, p. 92)

APRIL 1778

TO ESTABLISH more control over the sutlers' activities, Washington ordered brigade commanders to give him the names of their sutlers. He also fixed prices on more items. By June 1779, regulated merchandise in the 2nd Continental Artillery included all the items listed in the March 28 entry plus rum. (Mayer, Belonging, pp. 89, 92)

APRIL 9, 1778

JEREMIAH WADSWORTH became commissary general of purchases. (Weigley, U.S. Army, pp. 54-56)

FEB. 3, 1778

FEB. 6, 1778

APRIL 14, 1778

REGULATIONS for 1778 passed. They restored the commission system of paying the commissary agents and also allowed the commissary general of purchases to appoint and remove any officers under him. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 2; Weigley, *U.S. Army*, pp. 54-56)

JUNE 2, 1778

SUBSISTENCE wages were allowed in lieu of rations to officers. On Nov. 24, 1778, this was equated at 33 cents per ration. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 128)

NOVEMBER 1778 A BRIGADE court-martial sentenced sutler John McGraugh to one hundred lashes, "well laid on," for abusing and defrauding a local citizen. The sutler also had to reimburse the citizen, and was jailed until he revealed his accomplices. (Mayer, *Belonging*, p. 96) It should be noted that this was a severe punishment. Thirty lashes were enough to make the strongest man lose consciousness; a hundred lashes, at once, could be a death sentence.

1779

APRIL 14, 1779

SUBSISTENCE money was deemed insufficient due to inflation. States were to supply rum, sugar, coffee, tea, and chocolate at the expense of the United States. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 2)

OCT. 10, 1779

WADSWORTH resigned as commissary general of purchases, effective January 1, 1780. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 3)

NOV. 25, 1779

COMMISSARIES of Purchase and Issues were placed under the Board of War. (Hucles, *Haversack*, pp. 10, 129)

DEC. 1, 1779 -SPRING 1780 WASHINGTON'S army endured one of the the worst winters of the eighteenth century at Morristown, New Jersey. Multiple storms, including one lasting four days, piled snow in huge drifts, delaying shipments of provisions. The frigid weather discouraged desertion and prevented the spread of disease. Disease or malnourishment did claim two hundred lives, and hundreds more deserted, but this was far fewer than at Valley Forge, where the army had learned lessons in survival it now put to good use. Still, by May, the Marquis de Lafayette said the men were "reduced to the very verge of starvation." Local farmers provided grain, and Philadelphia merchants sent five hundred barrels of flour. (Weigley, U.S. Army, pp. 56-57; Alan Stein, Eric Olsen, & Joni Rowe, War Comes to Morristown, pp. 29-35; J. P. Martin, Private Yankee Doodle, pp.165-75)

1780

JAN. 1, 1780

THE REGULATION of 1780 passed. It established a fixed salary for the commissary general of purchases: \$4,000, plus six rations a day and forage for four horses. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 129)

JAN. 12, 1780

EPHRAIM BLAINE became commissary general of purchases. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 3)

FEB. 25, 1780

THE COLLAPSE of the Continental currency forced Congress to reorganize the food and forage procurement system on barter basis. Each state was to be assigned a quota of commissary supplies, which would be credited against its quota of money to be raised for Congress.

Known as the system of "specific supplies," this method was so complex that it was largely responsible for the misery at Morristown. Too many supplies were on hand, leading to spoilage and waste. (Weigley, *U.S. Army*, pp. 56-57; Hucles, *Haversack*, pp. 10-11, 129)

MARCH 11, 1780

OFFICERS' SERVANTS became eligible to receive subsistence as given to enlisted men. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 3)

JULY 26, 1780

MAJ. GEN. Nathaniel Greene stepped down as quartermaster general.

AUG. 5, 1780

COL. Timothy Pickering was appointed quartermaster general.

SEPT. 16, 1780

THE COMMANDANT of the post at West Point, New York, announced, "Any Sutler who shall hereafter refuse to



Col. Timothy Pickering

sell for Continental money may depend on having his effects seized, and be obliged to quit the Point [sic]." (Mayer, Belonging, p. 93)

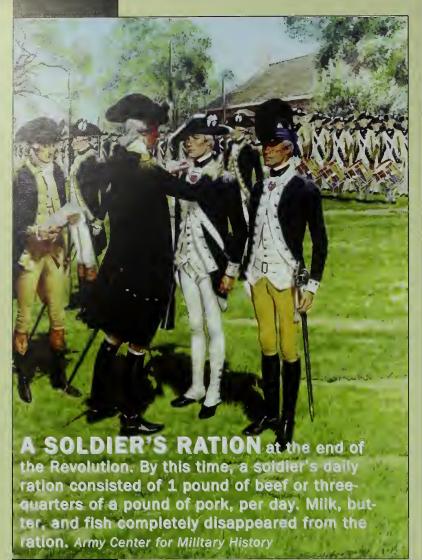
1781

1781

BRIGADE quartermasters began exercising more control over merchants in and around camps. This policy set a precedent for the future relationship between quartermasters and those who conducted the retail sale of food to the Army. (Mayer, *Belonging*, p. 93)

JULY 10, 1781

CONGRESS moved the Commissary of Purchases to the superintendent of finance, **Robert Morris**, who was directed to obtain supplies by contract. This change ended the commissariat system.



(Hucles, Haversack, p. 3)

OCT. 19, 1781

U.S. Military History: Lord Cornwallis surrendered his army to Gen. George Washington at Yorktown, Virginia, assuring American independence.

1782

1782

Food Technology: The seed-planting machine invented by Jethro Tull (Great Britain) resulted in larger harvests and less wasted seed. (Martin Elkort, The Secret Life of Food, p. 22)

1783

MARCH 2, 1783

SEVERAL GENERALS, brigade commanders, and regimental officers met to establish regulations regarding sutlers. Washington approved the regulations governing the numbers of sutlers, licensing requirements, sales prices and practices, the restriction on unlicensed sutlers, and the designation of market days and paydays. (Mayer, Belonging, p. 93)

MARCH 24, 1783 WASHINGTON suggested that regimental gardens supplement the soldiers' diet. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 3)

SEPT. 3, 1783

U.S. Military History: The Treaty of Paris ended the Revolution and recognized American independence. During the war, an estimated 4,435 Americans died of combat-related deaths and 6,188 were wounded. An estimated 20,000 American servicemen died of non-combat causes.

1784

1784

THE DAILY ration's meat component was reduced to 1 pound of beef, or three-quarters of a pound of pork, per day. Milk, butter, and fish disappeared from the ration. (Cassidy, Products for the Army, p. 1; J. Dyer, Subsistence Supply, II-1)

1785

1785

Food Technology: Englishman J. Ransome invented the cast-iron plow.

JULY 20, 1785

THE POSITION of commissary of military stores was abolished. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 3)

JULY 25, 1785

COL. Timothy Pickering stepped down as quartermaster general. Apparently, another was not appointed until March 4, 1791.

1787

MAY 25 -

SEPT. 17, 1787

U.S. History: The Constitutional Convention was held in Philadelphia.

1788

JUNE 21, 1788

U.S. History: New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify the Constitution, guaranteeing its adoption.

1789

MARCH 4, 1789

U.S. History: The new Constitution went into effect.

APRIL 6, 1789

U.S. History: The first congressional sessions began in New York City, the nation's first capital.

APRIL 30, 1789

U.S. History: George Washington was inaugurated as the nation's first president.

JULY 11, 1789

World History: French Revolution. Parisians began open revolt, leading to the storming of the Bastille prison on July 14. Within five years, the French monarchy was thrown out, and the resulting "Reign of Terror" executed thousands, among them were King Louis XVI and his queen, Marie-Antoinette.

AUG. 7, 1789

CONGRESS created the War Department. Army supply functions were vested with the secretary of war. (Barriger, Legislative History, p. 25)

1790

1790

Food Technology: Thomas Harris and John Long of Great Britain patented a refrigeration machine. (Elkort, Food, p. 22)

APRIL 30, 1790

THE MILITARY Peace Establishment Act provided one pound of fresh beef or three-quarters of a pound of pork per man per day. This legislation marked the first time the new U.S. constitutional government had directly dealt with the ration. (Cassidy, Products for the Army, p. 1)

AUGUST 4, 1790 U.S. Military History: The Revenue Cutters Service, predecessor of the Coast Guard, was formed.

1791

1791

RECOGNIZING the need for sutlers whenever commissaries weren't available on frontier posts, commanders and government officials began to license trustworthy merchants. (Samuel L. Cushing, "Subsistence Department: Splendid Record of the Personnel of the Corps," in Army & Navy Register, 7 Sep 1895; Risch, OM Support, p. 10)

MARCH 1791

THE GOVERNMENT contracted with civilian suppliers to provide food to troops at Fort Pitt, Pennsylvania. Because of the time and distance

involved in transporting the rations, the contract was beset with fraud, embezzlement, inferior food quality, and spoilage. (Cushing, "Subsistence Department," p. 17; Risch, QM Support, p. 10)



MARCH 4, 1791

SAMUEL Hodgdon became quartermaster general.

1792

Samuel Hodgdon

1792 - 1795

U.S. Military History: The United States was at war with Native American tribes in the old Northwest Territory (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin).

APRIL 19, 1792

JAMES O'HARA replaced Hodgdon as quartermaster general.

1794

JUNE 7, 1794 CONGRESS gave the president limited power to increase the daily ration whenever, in his opinion, the circumstances warranted.

The act also augmented the basic ration for troops on the frontier. (Barriger, Legislative History, p. 30; Cassidy, Products for the Army, p.1, fn 4; J. Dyer, Subsistence Supply, II-1; Hucles, Haversack, p. 3)

1795

FEB. 23, 1795

"PURVEYOR of Public Supplies" was the title of the Treasury Department employee who secured supplies. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 129)

MARCH 3, 1795

CONGRESS repealed all existing legislation regarding rations, reestablishing the former NCO ration of 1 pound of beef, three-fourths pound of pork, 1 pound of bread or flour, and a full gill (4 ounces) of rum, brandy, or whiskey.

Troops on the Western frontier were to receive an additional 2 ounces of flour and 2 ounces of beef. Cash could be substituted for items in the daily ration, since listed ration items were frequently out of stock. (Cassidy, Products for the

Army, p. 1; Barriger, Legislative History, p. 31; J. Dyer, Subsistence Supply, II-2)

1796

MAY 30, 1796

O'HARA stepped down as quartermaster general.

JUNE 1, 1796

MAY - OCT. 1797

MAJ. GEN. John Wilkins Jr. became quartermaster general.

1797

U.S. Military History: The launching of the frigates United States, Constellation, Constitution marked the beginning of the modern U.S. Navy.

1798

APRIL 30, 1798

U.S. Military History: The Navy Department was established.



James O'Hara

Maj. Gen. John Wilkins Jr.

JULY 16, 1798

FEAR of a possible war with France prompted Congress to return control of the Commissary Department to the War Department. (Barriger, Legislative History, p. 29; Hucles, Haversack, p. 4)

1798 - 1800

U.S. Military History: The United States was involved in a quasi-war on the high seas with France.



2

DISASTERS 1801 - 1860 AND REFORMS

O ONE KNEW IT IN 1801, but the evolution of commissaries was about to begin in earnest. The failures of Valley Forge and Morristown had taken place years earlier, but in the intervening years, no one seemed to have learned any lessons from them. Although armies were expected to "travel on their stomachs," incompetence, ignorance, or sheer neglect would keep those stomachs empty.

Not that the War Department didn't make some efforts. To ease the soldiers' burdens, the military allowed laundresses who accompanied the Army—usually these were soldiers' wives—a daily ration. The ration was supposedly improved, but the men, despite their meager pay, were expected to purchase extra goods from sutlers or farmers.

Secretary of War Henry Dearborn experimented with substituting malt liquor and light wines for spirits in the ration, but this, like so many other well-intentioned experiments, failed. The troops preferred the hard liquor.

The Military Peace Establishment Act of 1802 provided for three military agents and their assistants to purchase, receive, and forward all military stores and other articles. Trouble began immediately because the agents had no military rank and were not directly accountable to the War Department. Simultaneously, the Quartermaster General's Department and the Office of the Quartermaster General were eliminated.

A few years later, supplies were to be purchased on the open market, or through a system of advertised bids. An open market welcomed contractors, not all of whom were capable or trustworthy.

DISASTER IN LOUISIANA

A scandalous disaster at a peacetime encampment occurred in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

In February 1809, Brig. Gen. James Wilkinson arrived with more than two thousand troops at Terre aux Boeufs, Louisiana, near New Orleans. Their camp, placed on low ground, was literally plagued by improper sanitation. These conditions, when combined with a rising river and an unhealthy climate, resulted in a disaster.

Terrible provisions made things far worse. The subsistence contractor supplied sour, infested, and wormy bread; bad and infested flour; and spoiled meat. He even disguised the bad flour by mixing it with sweet flour, a clear indication that he knew exactly how bad the provisions were.

Wilkinson seemed oblivious to the problem, and turned a blind eye to it until men started dying in large numbers. By January 1810, more than forty officers and a thousand men had either resigned or perished. There were also 169 deserters.

Most of the evidence indicates that Wilkinson not only knew about the bad situation, he was actually in cahoots with the contractor and was getting a kickback. Wilkinson had previously come under sus-



"OUR LOSSES, in the late [War of 1812] and revolutionary wars, from this cause were probably much greater than from the sword. However well qualified for war in other respects, in the mere capacity of bearing privations, we are inferior to most nations. An American would starve on what a Tartar would live in comfort." — secretary of War John C. Calhoun, referring to problems with the military ration.

picion of conspiring with Aaron Burr to commit treason. Terre aux Boeufs was just the latest scandal to stain his reputation.

As a direct result of the losses at Terre aux Boeufs, the military agent system was abolished in 1812 and was replaced by the reestablishment of the Office of the Commissary General under the Office of the Quartermaster General. Unfortunately, no appreciable improvements took place, and conditions during the War of 1812 were not much better than they had been during the Revolution.

CALHOUN'S REFORMS

The War of 1812 brought no changes in the ration, and camp conditions were generally grim. Shortly after the war, however, things finally started to happen. Privations suffered by the Army before and during the war, as well as during a campaign against the Seminole Indians in Florida, became public knowledge during postwar hearings in 1818. Government officials were up in arms over the need for ample, quality food for the Army. Changes were bound to occur, especially after the House said the nature of the contracting system was itself "political and vicious."

The war was nearly over when, in December 1814, two noteworthy events occurred. First, Congress required the issue of Army rations to seamen or Marines cooperating with land troops, upon requisition. Second, a letter sent to Secretary of War James Monroe by Gen. Edmund P. Gaines stated his belief that the Army had lost more men during the War of 1812 due to faulty rations than enemy gunfire.

The new secretary of war, John C. Calhoun, agreed. Calhoun was intelligent

and energetic enough to recognize that something simply had to be done to properly feed the Army. He urged Congress to reorganize the Commissary General's Office and make it a separate bureau in Washington. Congress agreed, and the bureau was named the Subsistence Department. Congress viewed this as an experiment and initially limited its life to five years, but it would later be renewed for many years afterward.

The purchase and issue of provisions became a purely military operation under the direction of the secretary of war. At Calhoun's urging, a more nutritious daily ration was adopted. Vegetables (primarily peas), rice, and bacon were added to the ration. Calhoun also endorsed cornmeal over wheat bread, probably because it stayed edible longer. Since there was no way to ship fresh vegetables, the War Department issued an order requiring troops at all permanent posts to cultivate their own vegetable gardens. All frontier or outlying posts were also to raise grain, and Western frontier posts received Calhoun's approval to supplement the ration with buffalo meat.

Although these changes helped to create a healthier diet for the soldiers, reducing the cost of transporting military supplies was actually the primary concern. However, Calhoun's critics predictably complained that soldiers were being improperly used as farmers. Similar complaints were later made by twentieth-century critics who would charge that soldiers and sailors were being improperly used as grocers.

In 1818, Calhoun's annual report reiterated Gaines' earlier assessment that during the War of 1812, the United States suffered

more losses due to poor rations than to enemy action. What he went on to state is even truer today than it was at that time:

"Our people, even the poorest, being accustomed to a plentiful mode of living, require, to preserve their health, a continuation, in a considerable degree, of the same habits of life, in a camp; and a sudden and great departure from it subjects them, as is proved by experience, to great mortality. Our losses, in the late [1812] and revolutionary wars, from this cause were probably much greater than from the sword. However well qualified for war in other respects, in the mere capacity of bearing privations, we are inferior to most nations. An American would starve on what a Tartar would live in comfort."

Largely as a result of Calhoun's efforts, the old subsistence contracts were allowed to expire. The reorganized commissariat system began to function in 1819, and the Subsistence Department was established in 1820. It took another fifteen years, but Congress eventually made the department permanent in 1835.

During Calhoun's tenure as secretary of war, two key figures began lifelong terms in 1818: Col. George Gibson, who had already served as quartermaster general, became commissary general of subsistence, and held the post for forty-three years, until his death in September 1861. Brig. Gen. Thomas Jesup became quartermaster general and served for forty-two years, until his death in June 1860.

THE NAVY RATION

The Navy ration wasn't much better than the Army's, but it had several distinct advantages. The Navy's version provided a little more variety, and, unlike their Army brethren in the field, the sailors always had someone cooking for them whenever they were aboard ship. Navy cooks usually worked in galleys that were reasonably well equipped. Whether they were full time or on assigned temporary duty, Navy cooks tended to get better at their craft the longer they kept at it. Lucky was the crew that had an old hand for a cook—at least, that is, if he was neither embittered nor bored.

The official Navy ration of the years prior to the Civil War consisted of 4 pounds of beef and 3 of pork per week.

Almost surprisingly, it included no fish, presumably because the men could provide this part of the meal on their own. The Navy ration also included 1 pound of flour, 1 pound of rice, and 6 pounds of the infamous Navy biscuit (their answer to hardtack). The biscuit ration was roughly the equivalent of nearly a loaf of bread per man per day. As long as the biscuits were not infested with maggots or weevils, the men didn't go hungry.

There was also nearly 1 pound of sugar to go with coffee, tea, or cocoa; 4 ounces of butter; another 4 ounces of cheese; a pint and a half of the famous Navy beans, a half pint each of molasses and vinegar; and a pint and a half of "spirits," which usually meant rum. The ration's saving grace was 8 ounces of pickles or cranber-

ries per week. The men preferred the cranberries, as they added some flavor to the drab ration and were known to be a preventative for scurvy. However, the pickles apparently kept better on the voyage.

Anything the men needed in addition to the ration would have to be purchased at various ports of call, particularly from the local bumboats. These fulfilled the same function for the Navy as sutlers did for the Army. The bumboaters did not suffer from the miserable reputations that plagued the sutlers. The whole concept of men on deck purchasing goods from people in small boats worked well in the era when sailing ships came singly to harbor, and the ships' decks were reasonably accessible from water level. The method had been used for centuries, and would only come to an end with the advent of large, steel ships at the end of the nineteenth century.

THE MILITARY RETAIL BUSINESS

In the mid 1820s, the government got involved in the military retail sales business. Army regulations of 1825-26 first published the rules concerning the sale of subsistence items to officers. The regulations allowed the assistant commissaries to make sales from Subsistence Department warehouses at certain frontier posts in Florida and on the upper Great Lakes at "cost price plus transportation expenses."

Perhaps modern critics of the commissaries who point to "original intent" are thinking of this particular regulation, but it should be remembered that these sales stores did not sell to men of all ranks. Instead, the sales from subsistence warehouses went to officers only. Ironically, sales could be made only to officers and only for their own use. Those who benefited most from the nation's new concern over soldiers' welfare were those who suf-



AMERICAN SOLDIERS suffered from lack of quality rations during the campaign against the Seminole Indians. U.S. Army Center for Military History

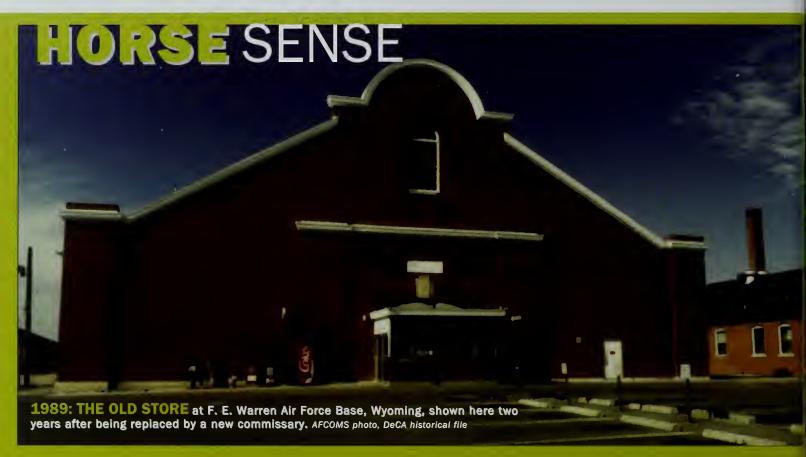
fered the least in terms of housing and provisions.

Still, this regulation established the basic principles of modern sales commissaries. They were to sell goods to uniformed soldiers, charging "cost" or "contract" price for those goods. The post's commanding officer was given a great deal of discretion in determining whether such sales were necessary. He still had to clear the sales with his superiors, but the regulations for 1834-35 specified that sales to officers could be carried out "at all posts on the Sabine, Arkansas, Missouri, Upper Mississippi, and all other posts where special permission is granted."

SUTLERS

The regulations also covered sutlers, stating they should have a "definite and respectable rank," doing business according to uniform regulations. While the War Department expected them to make a profit, sutlers had to charge the same prices to officers and enlisted, could not extend credit beyond 50 percent of a soldier's monthly pay, and could not sell enlisted troops any sort of consumable alcohol. They could collect on credit accounts from the soldiers' pay at the pay table.

There would be only one sutler per post, and he would be appointed by the secretary of war. If there was a spare building on post, the sutler would be allowed to use it; if not, he was permitted to construct one. In return, every two months the sutler would be assessed a maximum of 15 cents for every officer and enlisted man at the post. These funds would support various charitable causes on post, such as relief to widows or orphans of officers or enlisted men, relief to disabled soldiers, education of soldiers' children, the purchase of books for the post library, or the maintenance of the post band. This assessment appears to be the beginning of a practice that would later become commissary assistance to, and exchange support of, morale, welfare, and recreation programs.



Commissaries in Stables, Barns, and Riding Halls

N THE EIGHTEENTH and nineteenth centuries, stables, barns, and riding halls were among the most common buildings on Army posts. When the cavalry, along with horse-drawn wagons and caissons, eventually became obsolete, these structures were available for other uses. Frequently, they were turned into commissary sales facilities.

Among the best known was the West Riding Hall at Fort Riley, Kansas, built in 1907-08. It was a commissary from 1971-97, and received "Best Large Store" awards from both the Troop Support Agency (TSA) and the Defense Commissary Agency. Right across the street was a combined barracks and stable, built in 1905, that had

served as a commissary from 1958-71. Both buildings are now preserved as part of the historic district that comprises Fort Riley's "old post." (*See pages 72-73*) In Oklahoma, **Fort Sill** opened "a gleaming supermarket" in 1953 inside what had once been a 1911-vintage stable. Equipped with twelve registers to move 13,500 line items, it stayed in business until 1975.

From 1961-87, the commissary at **F. E. Warren Air Force Base**, Wyoming, also occupied a riding hall. Like Fort Riley's, it was built in 1907, when the base was still a cavalry post named **Fort D. A. Russell**. Helping design the store to be placed inside the riding hall was Air

Post commanders could appoint sutlers on a temporary basis, and were expected to form a council of administration to meet every two months. The council would prescribe such items as the quantity and kind of groceries that the sutler would be required to keep on hand. Commanders could also examine the sutler's ledgers, papers, weights, and measures.

NEW RESTRICTIONS

In 1832, President Andrew Jackson, exercising power granted by the changes made in 1818, ordered rum to be excluded from the Army's daily ration. Coffee and sugar were to serve as substitutes and were

provided at the daily rate of 4 pounds coffee and 8 pounds sugar per hundred men. Six years later, Congress agreed and removed all liquor from the Army's ration.

New restrictions were placed upon sutlers in 1840-41. Because of the huge debts that enlisted men could amass while patronizing the sutler, Secretary of War Joel R. Poinsett recommended that sutlers be prohibited from selling on credit and that troops be paid more frequently. Unfortunately, neither suggestion was implemented, but sutlers were at least prohibited from "farming out" or subletting their businesses. Such practices had been another source of trouble for enlisted customers.

In 1841, the War Department made a significant change for subsistence and the commissaries when it allowed officers to purchase items for their family members from commissary warehouses. This practice was specifically allowed for soldiers at Great Lakes and frontier posts, and generally at "all other posts where special permission is granted." However, the regulation didn't specify who could give this permission, but apparently it was the secretary of war.

THE WAR WITH MEXICO

The United States and Mexico went to war over territorial disputes in 1846. The war

Force 2nd Lt. M. Gary Alkire, who—by the time the base opened a new store in 1987—had become a major general, and was in command of the Air Force Commissary Service (AFCOMS). He took a personal interest in the new store, which was designed to reflect the historical architectural style of the old riding hall and its neighboring buildings. The 1987 store won an Air Force Design Merit Award for excellence in architecture.

For years, the oldest commissary building overseas was an old stable at Bamberg, Germany, built in 1917 for the German army. When American forces converted it to a commissary in 1951, the long brick building still had its original angled walls, exposed wooden beams, iron hitching rings, and feeding troughs. Also in Germany was a stable at Kelley Barracks, built in 1925. Renovated in 1965 for use as a commissary, it has remained in use to this day. The oldest commissary building in the Far East was—and still is—a converted stable at Camp Zama, Japan. Built in 1935 for the Japanese Imperial Army's military academy, it became an American commissary in the 1960s.

In the eastern United States there were several noteworthy old caval-

ry facilities. The store at New Cumberland Army Depot, Pennsylvania, had been in business at least since 1948. Originally built in 1918 as a stable, it had seven registers, stocked 10,710 line items and won numerous TSA and DeCA awards. Two similar facilities in the Washington, D.C. area became commissaries in the 1940s. Fort Myer converted a stable and hay barn built in 1930 into a commissary that was in business from 1943-94. After it opened during World War II, many famous individuals patronized this cuttingedge store, including Gen. George C. Marshall.



THE 'OLD RIDING HALL' at Fort Riley, Kansas. Built in 1907-08, it served as the post commissary from 1971-97. TSA photo, DeCA historical file

Not far away, the store at Fort McNair in Washington, D.C., occupied two stables built in 1922. Converted to a commissary in 1945, the stables were joined by a structure built over the courtyard between them. The new structure became the commissary sales area, while the old stables became back rooms and storage areas. When it closed in 1994, the building still exhibited unique features that spoke of a bygone era: slate roofs with two rows of "snowbirds," iron hitching rings, exterior doors to second-story haylofts, exterior loft hoists, carved eaves, interlocking brickwork around arched doorways and windows, wooden beams and rafters, and star-shaped iron braces supporting the exterior walls. Fittingly, this classic old structure now houses the U.S. Army's Center for Military History. (See photos on page 36)

Now is probably the best time to officially correct a long-held misconception concerning one of the most honored commissaries in history: the store at **Fort Monroe**, Virginia. Nearly everyone who saw the store's roofline was fooled into believing the building was an old stable. However, it had none of the earmarks of a stable. There were no loft

doors, no troughs, no hitching posts. There were, however, five bays, large enough to accommodate motor trucks, that opened from the front end onto the sales floor. These bays were linked to the building's true origins: a garage for motor vehicles serving the coast artillery. It had been built by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) in the 1930s.

The facility at Fort Monroe served as a commissary from 1947 to 2003, earning several "Best Small Store" awards from the TSA and one from DeCA.



was waged primarily on Mexican soil, which meant that the Army had lengthy lines of supply. Logistically speaking, this was a tremendous worry to the generals who planned the campaigns. On paper, it appeared that the United States could easily lose the war.

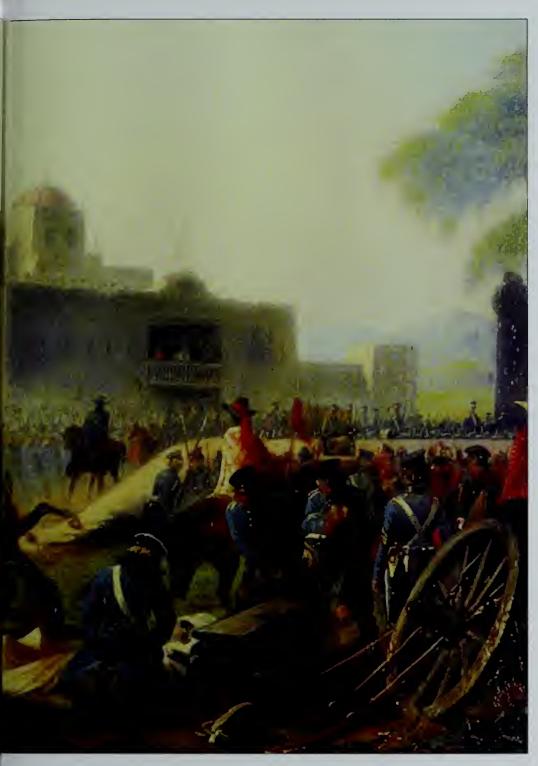
In reality, the United States won handily, largely because the Mexicans were poorly led by officers who had received their commissions due to their wealth, influence, or political power rather than their skill and training. Meanwhile, many of the American

officers had been trained at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and conducted their campaigns with skill. England's Duke of Wellington, the conqueror of Napoleon, called the campaign by American Gen. Winfield Scott the most brilliant of modern times.

Once the Army was in Mexico, Yankee foodstuffs (in this case, a Yankee was anyone who lived north of the Rio Grande River) were difficult to get. Some of the beef the American Army ate while campaigning was supplied by Mexican contrac-

tors. Like the American farmers who had sold provisions to the British while Washington's men were starving at Valley Forge, most of the Mexican contractors were driven more by the profit motive than by patriotism. These contractors would have been vilified by the Army and the press, and possibly tried for treason, had they been Americans selling to the Mexicans.

Among the contractors was Mexican General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, better known in American history as simply



"Santa Anna." To Americans, he was the hated villain of both the capture of the Alamo and the horrific (though less well-known) slaughter of hundreds of prisoners at Goliad during Texas' War of Independence in 1836.

A decade later he was still very much alive. Nothing if not mercenary, Santa Anna was not about to let a war stand in the way of making a profit. He sold beef to the Americans, the very army his own men were confronting in battle. But neither Santa Anna nor other Mexican contractors

did the Americans any favors. Much of the beef was so putrid and gummy that "if thrown against a smooth plank it would stick." Meanwhile, U.S. soldiers foraging in Mexico discovered that they were illequipped to properly digest many of the local fruits and liquors. Dysentery became common in the American ranks.

When the major fighting of the Mexican War ended by late 1847, the Americans had won a decisive victory ... so decisive that a peace treaty (the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo) could not be signed until

February 1848, since the Mexican government had dispersed when the American Army entered Mexico City.

CONSEQUENCES OF TERRITORIAL ACQUISITION

By the terms of the treaty, Mexico ceded the United States a tremendous amount of territory. The annexation of Texas was solidified. Together, Texas and the "Mexican Cession" comprised an area that was half the size of the existing United States. The 1848 cession included all or part of the modern states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

Expansion soon proved to be a mixed blessing because it intensified the ongoing dispute over extending slavery into the territories—the issue that ultimately led to the Civil War. More immediately, though, the United States acquired a Pacific coastline and a Southwestern frontier with hundreds of thousands of square miles of open country. In an 1846 agreement with Great Britain, the United States received the southern half of the Oregon Territory.

More than forty years earlier, America's expansion had started in earnest. In 1803, the United States bought the Louisiana Territory from France and acquired more than eight hundred thousand square miles of land from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains. The deal between President Thomas Jefferson and the French Emperor Napoleon was done for about \$15 million. France received funds for its European wars, and the United States doubled in size.

While these events fulfilled the nation's so-called "Manifest Destiny," all of this immense expanse would have to be pacified and defended. The Army would have to establish forts along the border with Mexico, on the coast, along immigrant trails, and throughout the interior regions. The Navy needed to establish port facilities and shipyards for the dual purpose of patrolling the West Coast and making the United States a major presence in the Pacific.

The discovery of gold in California in 1848 set off the Gold Rush of 1849, and the influx of immigrants into California was immense. They came by ship from Europe, China, and Central America, and by wagon and on foot from the eastern United States. This explosion of humanity increased the population of California so quickly that it was able to apply for statehood as a free state (a state not allowing slavery) the following year.

As more people trekked West, a new round of debates flared in Congress, centering upon where, if anywhere, the institution of slavery could be extended into the territories. The debates involved questions that touched on religion, economics, morality, states' rights, tariffs, abolitionism, nullification, ethics, and the concept that "all men are created equal." The issues were emotional and

volatile, and words and emotions grew steadily more abrasive as the years passed. In a decade the nation would be on the brink of civil war.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

At the same time, the nation was in the midst of the Industrial Revolution, which was altering the face of the cities and changing demographics. Steam power was making it possible to traverse the country by boat and by rail. The pervasive enthusiasm for all things scientific prompted some amazing inventions that had an immediate impact upon the food industry, and the new ability to travel quickly and manufacture products in large quantities helped to inspire and proliferate those advancements.

The name of one man of this era who experimented with new ways of producing and preserving food is still very familiar to us today. He was Gail Borden, a Texan who previously had been a land surveyor and newspaper publisher. For several years, he had been experimenting with ways of preserving foods that would stay edible during the wagon trains' long journeys to the West. The gold rush prompted him to develop a dried-meat biscuit, and he distributed free samples to prospectors

1853: FORT VANCOUVER, Washington. The territory gained by the United States by war, annexation, or treaty during the 1840s created a tremendous need for frontier posts along the border with Mexico, the West Coast, the immigrant trails, and throughout the interior regions. The territorial expansion put severe strains on an already outdated system of supplying troops in the field. National Archives

departing for the trip to California. In 1851, he was awarded a gold medal at the London Exhibition for developing that biscuit.

After receiving the medal, Borden conceived a product which is still well-known even today and which was later purchased in large quantities by the Army. During the course of the voyage home, he discovered that the children of immigrant passengers were dependent upon a herd of dairy cows, kept below decks, for their daily supply of fresh milk. If the cows got seasick, they didn't produce milk, and the children went without.

The children were often as seasick as the cows and sometimes died from dehydration and a lack of milk. Borden became determined to find a way to preserve milk and make shipboard cows unnecessary.

In 1856, Borden obtained a patent on condensed milk. This process involved heating fresh milk in a vacuum pan and evaporating most of its water content. The remaining milk could be kept for long periods in sealed cans or bottles and then reconstituted by adding water. He opened a plant near New York City, with offices in Brooklyn. His timing was fortuitous, as he was able to benefit from newspaper articles

on the contaminated fresh milk being marketed at the time. During the Civil War, the government would contract with him for his entire wartime output in an effort to bring wholesome milk to the Army.

The efforts of other famous names of the 1850s had indirect effects upon military subsistence and, eventually, on commissary stores. In 1857, French microbiologist Louis Pasteur began perfecting "Pasteurization," the process of heating food in order to kill harmful microorganisms. The next year, John Landis Mason invented the Mason jar for canning purposes. In 1859, the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co., founded by George Huntington Hartford, opened its first store in New York. Later known as A & P, this company would be the first big retail grocery chain in an era of general stores and corner grocers.

Despite these and other signs of progress, the methods of producing, packaging, and preserving most foodstuffs were still antiquated, as was the Army's way of feeding its men. In 1860, the time was fast approaching when the old practices would finally be recognized as wholly inadequate and unsatisfactory. Unfortunately, a lot of people would have to suffer a great deal before changes would finally occur.

CHRONOLOGY of KEY EVENTS

1801

1801

JUNE 10, 1801 -

JUNE 4, 1805

U.S. Military History: Creation of the Army Engineering Corps.

U.S. *Military History:* The United States fought a war against the Barbary pirates of the Mediterranean.

1802

1802

U.S. Military History: President Thomas Jefferson signed legislation to create the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York.

MARCH 15, 1802

LAUNDRESSES accompanying the Army were allowed one ration per day. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 4)



President Thomas Jefferson

MARCH 16, 1802

CONGRESS again changed

the ration: 18 ounces bread or flour; 20 ounces beef or 12 ounces pork; a gill of brandy, rum, or whiskey; salt and vinegar; soap and candles. But the government expected soldiers to purchase supplementary items from sutlers or farmers. (Cassidy, *Products for the Army,* p. 1, *fn* 6; J. Dyer, *Subsistence Supply*, II-2) On the same date, John Wilkins Jr. stepped down as quartermaster general.

APRIL 1, 1802

THE MILITARY Peace Establishment Act provided for three agents and their assistants to purchase, receive, and forward all military stores and other articles. The Quartermaster General's Department was abolished, as was the Office of the Quartermaster General. (Barriger, Legislative History, p. 31; Risch, QM Support, p. 130)

1803

Food Technology: Thomas Moore invented the insulated icebox. (Elkort, *Food*, p. 22)

DEC. 20, 1803

1803

U.S. History: The Louisiana Purchase. France ceded to the United States eight hundred thousand square miles of land from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains. The \$15 million purchase doubled the size of the nation's territory.

1803 - 1804

HENRY Dearborn, secretary of war, looked at replacing spirits with malt liquor and light wines in the ration. The tests failed; the troops wanted hard liquor. (Risch, *QM Support*, p. 118)



1804

MAY 1804 -SEPT 1806

1805

1807

1809

U.S. History: The Lewis and Clark Expedition.
President Thomas Jefferson

Secretary Henry Dearborn

commissioned the survey, led by Army officers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, to explore some eight thousand miles of territory round trip from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean. Jefferson wanted the men to find the Northwest Passage, a waterway linking the Atlantic with the Pacific oceans. Although they didn't find such a passage, they did make contact with many Native American tribes, and surveyed thousands of square miles of geography.

1805

U.S. Military History: U.S. Marines captured Tripoli, ending the war against the Barbary pirates.

1807

New Product: Benjamin Stillman began selling bottled soda water in his store at Yale University. (Elkort, *Food*, p. 22)

1809

Food Technology: Joseph Hawkins patented **carbonation**. (Elkort, *Food*, p. 22)

MARCH 3, 1809 EFFECTIVE this date, military supplies were to be purchased on the open market, or through advertised bids. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 130)

JUNE 9 -SEPT. 10, 1809 MORE THAN HALF the soldiers of a twothousand-man encampment died or deserted at Terre aux Boeufs, Louisiana, near New Orleans, because of improper sanitation, an unhealthy climate, and bad provisions. The contractor had supplied sour and wormy bread, bad flour, and spoiled meat. (Weigley, U.S. Army, pp. 113-14)

UNCLE SAM and the Commissary

NCLE SAM originated during the War of 1812 and was named after Sam Wilson of Troy, New York, who supplied beef to the Army. Government puring agents stamped Wilson's barrels with the letters indicating they were government property. Since 'ilson was known around Troy as "Uncle Sam Wilson," soldies began associating the stamp with "Uncle Sam."

"Uncle Sam" became synonymous with the United States itself and was popularized by political cartoonists. The British magazine Punch pictured him as a whiskered, slender gentleman wearing striped trousers; other magazines imitated this version, and by 1900 the slender Uncle Sam was well-established as a popular symbol.

The most famous depiction of Uncle Sam was painted in 1917 by James Montgomery Flagg (1877-1960). Using a mirror, Flagg served as his own model; Uncle Sam's face is Flagg's. Although he painted many magazine covers and wartime posters, Uncle Sam was always considered Flagg's most famous work. Four million copies were issued during World War I. It was reissued for World War II and is still used today.

- Photo courtesy National Archives



1810

Food Technology: Parisian confectioner Nicolas Appert (see page 12), had invented the rudiments of the modern canning process. He used glass containers (champagne bottles) that had been kept in boiling water. (Military Market, Oct 1955, p. 40)

1810

1812

Food Technology: Englishman Brian Donkin invented the tin can. (Elkort, Food, p. 23)

1812

THE APPROVED daily ration for the Army was 1 gill rum, .32 gills vinegar, 2 pounds flour, 20 ounces beef, .6 ounces salt. (Cassidy, Products for the *Army*, p. 1)

MARCH 28, 1812 THE MILITARY agent system was abolished due to inefficiency. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 130)

APRIL 1812

THE OFFICE of the Commissary General was reestablished under the Office of the Quartermaster General.

APRIL 4, 1812

BRIG. GEN. Morgan Lewis became quartermaster general.

JUNE 18, 1812 -DEC. 24, 1814

U.S. Military History: War of 1812. The United States declared war on Great Britain, to protect U.S. ships caught in the European conflict between the British and French. During the war, the British burned Washington, bombarded Fort McHenry near Baltimore (inspiring Francis Scott Key's poem, the "Star Spangled Banner"), and attacked New Orleans.

1813

MARCH 2, 1813

LEWIS stepped down as quartermaster general.

MARCH 3, 1813

CONGRESS empowered the president to appoint the commissary or other officer in the Quartermaster Department who supplied the troops. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 130)

Brig. Gen. Morgan Lewis

MARCH 22, 1813 BRIG. GEN. Robert Swart-

out became quartermaster general.

1814

DEC. 15, 1814

CONGRESS REQUIRED the issue of Army



rations to seamen or Marines cooperating with land troops, upon requisition. (J. Dyer, Subsistence Supply, II-7)

DEC. 23, 1814

IN A LETTER to Secretary of War James Monroe, Gen. Edmund P. Gaines wrote that "the troops are often compelled to draw damaged rations, or none at all." (House Rpt No. 138 (13-1), Annual Report of the Secretary of War, communicated to the House of Representatives, 25 Jan 1815) The House later concluded that the nature of the contracting system was "political and vicious." (Barriger, Legislative History, pp. 41-43)

DEC. 24, 1814

U.S. Military History: The Treaty of Ghent ended the War of 1812. The treaty was signed in Belgium. All total, 2,260 Americans died and 4,505 were wounded. The war ended in a stalemate.

1815

JAN. 8, 1815

U.S. Military History: Battle of New Orleans. There were actually two battles. The first took place on Dec. 23, 1814. The second, fought on Jan. 8, 1815, is the more famous of the two. It resulted in the total defeat of the British forces involved; however, with the lack of communications, no one knew that the war had ended two weeks earlier.

JUNE 18, 1815

World History: Battle of Waterloo. After escaping exile, Napoleon Bonaparte led his French army to Belgium, where he was defeated by a coalition of British and Prussian troops led by the Duke of Wellington. Napoleon would be exiled again, this time to St. Helena in the South Atlantic.

1816

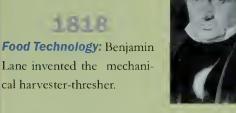
APRIL 24, 1816

ONE MORE RATION was allowed to subordinate officers. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 4)

APRIL 29, 1816

SWARTOUT stepped down as quartermaster general. Col. George Gibson replaced him

1818 Food Technology: Benjamin Lane invented the mechani-



Brig. Gen. Robert Swartout

APRIL 14, 1818

SUBSISTENCE problems during the War of 1812, and in later actions against the

Seminole Indians, prompted the new secretary of war, John C. Calhoun, to urge Congress to reorganize the Commissary General's office into a separate bureau in Washington known as the "Subsistence Department." The purchase and issue of provisions became a purely military operation under Calhoun's direction. (Secretary of War, Annual Report, 14 Dec 1818, p. 9)

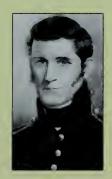
At Calhoun's urging, vegetables (primarily peas), rice, and bacon were added to the ration. Remote posts were also to raise grain, and they were allowed to supplement the ration with buffalo meat. (Secretary of War, Annual Report, 14 Dec 1818, p. 10; Cassidy, Products for the Army, p. 1; Cushing, "Subsistence Department," pp. 5-9; Dickson, Chow, pp. 12-14; Risch, QM Support, pp. 182, 204; Weigley, U.S. Army, pp. 134-35)

APRIL 14, 1818

COL. George Gibson stepped down as quartermaster general to take up the position of commissary general of subsistence.

APRIL 18, 1818

GIBSON became commissary general of subsistence, a post he held for forty-three years until his death in 1861. (Risch, OM Support, p. 382)



Col. George Gibson

MAY 8, 1818

BRIG. GEN. Thomas Jesup became quartermaster general. Jesup held the post for forty-two years, until his death in June 1860.

DEC. 14, 1818

THE ANNUAL report of Secretary of War John C. Calhoun pointed out glaring problems in the methods of subsistence supply. (Secretary of War, Annual Report, 14 Dec 1818, pp. 8-9)

1819

JUNE 1, 1819

THE OLD subsistence contracts expired, and

TERRITORIAL EXPANSION

many Despite its growing duties, the Army remained small, and the methods of feeding it remained antiquated.



OCT. 26, 1825

1826

the reorganized commissariat system began to function. The Commissary General of Subsistence still purchased subsistence stores by contract, but the contractors delivered them in bulk to a given point or depot where a commissary officer made inspection. (Risch, *QM Support*, pp. 202-03)

1820

THE SUBSISTENCE Department was established. (Risch, *QM Support*, p. 182; Stat. 780; 23rd Congress, 1st session, No. 568)

1821

THE REORGANIZATION Act, which took effect June 1, 1821, reduced the size of the Army but left the Subsistence Department unchanged. (House Report 315 (23-1), 4 Mar 1834, pp. 1, 7; Risch, QM Support, p. 195; Weigley, U.S. Army, p. 563)

1823

CONGRESS renewed the Office of the Commissary General of Subsistence. (*House Report* 315 (23-1), 4 Mar 1834, pp. 1, 7)

1825

THE FIRST RULES mentioning sales of commissary goods, as well as the rules under which the sutlers would have to operate, were published under General Regulations of the Army for 1825.

The regulations allowed the assistant commissaries to sell to officers at certain frontier posts articles needed for their personal subsistence. They were charged the cost price plus transportation expenses. Sales commissaries for all ranks were still forty-two years in the future. (General Regulations for the Army, 1825, p. 309, Article 72, Section 1153-54. See entry for 1826.)

The regulations stated that sutlers had to charge the same prices to officers and enlisted, and could not extend credit beyond 50 percent of a soldier's monthly pay. (Regulations for the Army, 1825, pp. 70-76, Article 40, Sections 338-65; Events, p. 1)

Technology & Demographics: The first boat to use the Erie Canal began a week-long journey from Buffalo to New York City. The canal stretched from Buffalo to Albany, connecting the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, and helped open what is today's Midwest to settlement.

1826

ARMY REGULATIONS of 1826 again authorized sales of commissary goods to officers for their personal subsistence at the same remote posts mentioned in the 1825 regulations.

At all other posts, sales to officers were prohibited except when the commanding officer determined that subsistence could not be obtained from other sources. Goods would be sold to uniformed

1820

MARCH 2, 1821

JAN. 23, 1823

1825

soldiers who would be charged "cost" or "contract" price for those goods. (Cushing, "Subsistence Department," p. 179; Events, p. 1; General Regulations for the Army, 1825, sections 1153 and 1154. See entry for 1825.)

1827

MARCH 2, 1827

CONGRESS PROVIDED for the appointment of assistant commissaries of subsistence. (Annual Report of The Commissary-General of Subsistence, 19 Oct 1867, p. 581)

1829

MARCH 2, 1829

CONGRESS AGAIN renewed the Office of Commissary General of Subsistence for five years (House Report 315 (23-1), 4-5 Mar 1834; Commissariat Report)

1830

1830

New Products: In England, Dr. J. G. B. Siegert began bottling aromatic bitters under the brand name Angostura. (Elkort, Food, p. 23)

1831

Food Technology: American Cyrus

McCormick invented the mechanical reaper. received the patent three years later. This was the beginning of the end of harvesting with scythes. Now a few farm hands did what formerly took hundreds of people weeks to do. (Elkort, Food, p. 23)

1832



Cyrus McCormick

OCT. 25, 1832

PRESIDENT Andrew Jackson, exercising power granted by the changes made in 1818, ordered rum to be excluded from the daily ration. Coffee and sugar were to serve as substitutes and were provided at the daily rate of 4 pounds of

coffee and 8 pounds of sugar per hundred men. (Munitions Board, Report on Subsistence Supply System, II-2; Cassidy, Products for the Army, p. 1, and Barriger, Legislative History, p. 91, all say 1834; while Dickson, Chow; Goins, "A History of Army Rations," p. 30; and Hucles, Haversack, p. 4, all say 1832.)



President Andrew Jackson

1834

CONGRESS empowered the president to issue rations to Indians. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 130)

1834-35

JUNE 30, 1834

THE ARMY Regulations for 1835 (1834 according to Cushing) specified that sales to officers could be carried out "at all posts on the Sabine, Arkansas, Missouri, Upper Mississippi, and all other posts where special permission is granted." (Cushing, "Subsistence Department," p. 179; General Regulations of the Army, 1835, p. 11, sections 34 and 35)

According to a Department of the Army fact sheet published in 1959, "In 1834 sale of subsistence to officers' families had been authorized." The fact sheet cited War Department General Orders No. 20, 1866, and No. 87 in 1867, as well as the Report of the Secretary of War for 1880, but both of these sources were obviously written long after the fact.

We know that sales of subsistence to officers' families took place in 1841. At present, this is the earliest date that can be confirmed. (Army Fact Sheet, Origin and History of Sales Commissaries, Nov. 1959. See the entry for 1841.)

1835

1835 - 1860

BEFORE the Civil War, the Navy weekly ration per man consisted of 4 pounds of beef and 3 of pork; 1 pound of flour; 1 pound of rice; a few ounces of either coffee, tea, or cocoa; 4 ounces of butter; another 4 ounces of cheese; a pint and a half of beans; a half pint each of molasses and vinegar; and a pint and a half of "spirits" (usually rum). There were also about 8 ounces each of pickles or cranberries. The ration included a high amount of sugars, starches, and carbohydrates. There was 1 pound of sugar per week and 6 pounds of the infamous Navy biscuit. (Nathan Miller, The U.S. Navy: An Illustrated History, pp. 70-71)

MARCH 3, 1835

FEB. 23 -

MARCH 6, 1836

CONGRESS made the Subsistence Department permanent fifteen years after its initial establishment. (Risch, QM Support, p. 182; Stat. 780; 23rd Congress, Session, No. 568)

1836

Military History: Thousands of Mexican troops under Mexican dictator Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna besieged and overran the Alamo, an old Spanish mission at present-day San Antonio, Texas. Less than two hundred Texan revolutionaries, led by William Travis, Davy Crockett and

Jim Bowie, were credited with delaying Santa Anna long enough for a larger force of Texans to eventually defeat him at the battle of San Jacinto.

APRIL 21, 1836

Military History: Near what is now Houston, a force of about nine hundred Texans under Gen. Sam Houston defeated and captured Santa Anna and his army at the Battle of San Jacinto, giving the province of Texas its independence from Mexico. Stephen F. Austin, acknowledged as the father of Texas, had originally led American colonists into Texas, decades earlier, and later pushed for independence. Texas would remain independent until it joined the United States in 1845.

NOV. 1, 1836 -AUG. 14, 1842 U.S. Military History: Seminole War in Florida. This war, already unpopular among Americans who did not live on the frontier, cost the lives of fifteen hundred soldiers. It ended with most of the Seminole Indians being deported to Oklahoma.

1837

Food Technology: Elijah Pitts invented the mechanical thresher, which separated grain from the chaff and did for threshing what the reaper had done for harvesting. (Elkort, *Food*, p. 23)

1838

JULY 5, 1838

RESPONDING to both the temperance movement and to health concerns, Congress officially removed liquor from the daily ration. The new ration consisted of 1 pound flour, 1.9 ounces sugar, .6 ounces salt, .16 gill vinegar, 20 ounces beef, 2.4 ounces dried beans, and .96 ounces green, unground coffee. (Barriger, Legislative History, p. 68; Cassidy, Products for the Army, p. 1; J. Dyer, Subsistence Supply, II-2)

1839

Food Technology: Prior to this year, Englishman Peter Durand had conceived and patented the use of tin cans for canning, rather than glass bottles. Now he began using steel containers with thin tin coats. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

1839

DEC. 5, 1840

1841

SECRETARY OF WAR Joel R. Poinsett suggested that sutlers be prohibited from selling on credit and that troops be paid more often. (Secretary of War, *Annual Report*, 5 Dec 1840, p. 26)

1840

1841

GENERAL REGULATIONS for the Army



1836-1842: SEMINOLE WAR. During the second Seminole War, U.S. soldiers received a new ration of 1 pound of flour, 1.9 ounces sugar, .6 ounces of salt, .16 gill vinegar, 20 ounces of beef, 2.4 ounces of dried beans, and .96 ounces of green, unground coffee. Pictured above is the famous Seminole, Osceola. Although he was not a chief, his ability and fiery spirit made him the symbol of resistance and a key leader in the Second Seminole War. Osceola died in 1838 while imprisoned at Fort Moultrie, South Carolina. State of Florida Web site

prohibited sutlers from subletting their businesses. (Regulations, 1841, Article XXXIX, Sections 184-98) In addition, approval was given for officers to use commissary facilities when purchasing items for their families at "all posts on Red River, Arkansas, Missouri, upper Mississippi, and its waters; on the Upper [Great] Lakes, and all other posts where special permission is granted." (Army Regulations, 1841, Article LXXVIII, Section 1116) Stock lists increased without official approval. With increased business, some regulations were ignored and others were liberally interpreted. (Cushing, Subsistence Department, pp. 16-17)

1842

Subsistence & Technology: Following a cholera epidemic that killed thirty-five hundred citizens, and a fire that consumed twenty city blocks, New York City constructed a forty-one-mile-long aqueduct to the Croton River to supply the city with fresh water. This was the first project of its type and size in the United States.

1842

The abundance of water made firefighting and public sanitation feasible, supplied enough for

industrial needs, and led to a newfound enthusiasm for frequent bathing. This practice had been previously frowned upon to such an extent that several state legislatures had actually considered outlawing it. (Life, Bicentennial Issue, p. 95)

1842

Marketing: In lower Manhattan, Scottish drygoods merchant Alexander T. Stewart opened the Marble Palace, a lavish retail operation that was the country's first large-scale, departmentalized store. (Audacity, The Magazine of Business History, Spring 1997)

AUG. 23, 1842

THE POSITION of commissary general of purchases was again abolished. Duties were taken over by the Quartermaster Department. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 131)

1845

1845

Food History: Potato rot caused massive crop failures in Europe and began a famine in Ireland. These events caused a large influx of Irish immigrants into the United States. (Elkort, Food, p. 24)

OCT. 10, 1845

U.S. Military History: The U.S. Naval Academy was established at Annapolis, Maryland. (Miller, U.S. Navy, p. 131)

1845 - 1848

Food Technology: A British expedition, led by Sir



IN THE HEAT of Palo Alto during the Mexican War (1846-48), Americans were frequently seen sharing their rations with their fallen Mexican adversaries—a practice lampooned in this exaggerated cartoon. Library of Congress

John Franklin, searched to find and chart the Northwest Passage. Franklin had 128 men and two ships, HMS Erebus and HMS Terror. Despite being an experienced polar explorer and having the newest equipment—what would later be called "state of the art"—Franklin was doomed to failure. Not a single man survived the expedition.

For years it was assumed the men had died of scurvy, starvation, and freezing. Not until 1984, with the exhumation and autopsies of the bodies of three men who died early in the expedition, were the facts discovered. The men had been slowly poisoned by lead from the solder that sealed the tin cans containing their provisions! The poisoning made the men sick, and the ships' physicians undoubtedly fed them more of the poisoned food in an ill-fated attempt to strengthen them. The poisoning left the men physically weak and vulnerable to other diseases. It also caused progressively worsening mental derangement, causing faulty judgment and irrational behavior. The last survivors apparently resorted to cannibalism.

At the time, lead poisoning was so ill-understood that the British government did not ban the use of lead solder on food cans until 1890. (Owen Beattie and John Geiger, Frozen in Time, entire; also Beattie, Geiger and Shelly Tanaka, Buried in Ice, entire)

Ironically, it was during this same period that one of the most infamous incidents in American history took place. Thousands of miles to the south, the tragedy of the Donner Party occurred. Caught in the Sierra Nevada mountains during the winter of 1846-47, these migrants were beset by starvation. Like the Franklin expedition, they ultimately turned to cannibalism. Unlike Franklin's expedition, the Donner party had some survivors; but this was obviously an unusually big year for snow and bad food supplies.

MAY 13, 1846 -FEB. 2, 1848

U.S. Military History: Mexican War. While the Franklin expedition was trapped in the ice and the Donner Party was trapped in the mountains, the United States and Mexico went to war. During this conflict, U.S. troops were cut down by dysentery. The Mexican fruits and locally made liquors were too potent for Yankee digestive systems.

1846

Dr. John Campbell, an Army physician at Veracruz, treated hundreds of dysentery patients and complained the men kept "drinking wine and liquor and swilling fruits in spite of what I say." At Camargo, fifteen hundred men died of

History of American Military Commissaries

dysentery and yellow fever. Rations were sometimes difficult to get. Some beef supplied to the American Army—by *Mexican* contractors—was so putrid and gummy that "if thrown against a smooth plank it would stick." (Nevin, *The Mexican War*, pp. 62, 173)

Most of these vendors, much like the American civilians who had sold provisions to the British while Washington's men were starving at Valley Forge, were obviously not driven by patriotism but by the profit motive. (Nevin, Mexican War, p. 61)

Often, even the most basic ration-related equipment was faulty. Canteens, for example, were usually made from wood, India rubber, or tin; the wood tended to dry out and leak, the rubber gave the water a terrible taste, and the tin often caused it to overheat. Some men used hollowed-out gourds instead. The water was brackish, saline, or "green with slime," and "acted as an instantaneous emetic." (Nevin, Mexican War, pp. 61, 110)

1847

U.S. Military History: U.S. forces take Mexico



One of the first boxes of "Saratoga Chips."

SEPT. 14, 1847

Birth of the **POTATO CHIP**

N 1853, A COMPLAINT made history. Trying to please a fussy customer who kept asking that his fried potatoes be sliced thinner, **George Crum**, chef for the Moon Lake Lodge of Saratoga Springs, New York, became frustrated. Slicing the spuds razor-thin, he growled, "Let's see if these are thin enough for him." He was amazed when the customer was indeed satisfied. Other patrons curiously crowded around, asking for a sample.

Crum had inadvertently invented the **potato chip.** Later he marketed his invention—initially, under the name "Saratoga Chips." (Elkort, *Food*, pp. 150-51)

City. On September 8, the battle for Mexico City began on its outskirts with a series of assaults. American forces under Gen. Winfield Scott eventually pushed their way to Chapultepec Castle, the city's only remaining fortification. By September 13, the Americans had overrun the castle. The next day they entered the Mexican capital.

1848

FEB. 2, 1848

U.S. Military History: The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican War. America lost 1,733 soldiers killed in combat and another 11,550 troops to other causes—mainly disease. Some 4,152 soldiers were wounded. The U.S. annexed Texas, and Mexico ceded all or part of what is now Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming.

1849

1849

Demographics: The discovery of gold in California in 1848 set off the **Gold Rush of 1849**, which increased the population so quickly that the territory applied for statehood the next year.

1849

Food Technology: The gold rush prompted **Gail Borden**, a Texan inventor, to develop a dried meat biscuit, and he distributed free samples to prospectors departing for the trip to California. (*Life*, Bicentennial Issue, p. 95)

MARCH 3, 1849

PROCEEDS from the sale of supplies in Mexico were to go to the Treasury Department. Subsistence officers were later [Sept. 28, 1850] exempted from this law. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 131)

1850

1850

Military Technology: Benjamin J. Lane of the United States patented the gas mask. Soldiers would now be protected from chemical attacks—but their rations were not.

SEPT. 26, 1850

CONGRESS enlarged the Commissariat. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 131)

SEPT. 28, 1850

SUBSISTENCE officers were exempted from sending the proceeds of subsistence sales to the Treasury Department. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 131)

1851

1851

Food Technology & History: Gail Borden received a gold medal at the London Exhibition for developing the dried-meat biscuit. (Life, Bicentennial Issue, p. 95)

1852

AUG. 31, 1852

THE SUBSISTENCE Department was allowed to purchase goods in advance of the fiscal year. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 131)

1855

1855 - 1856

A THREE-MAN commission was sent to Europe by Secretary of War Jefferson Davis to study European armies, especially those forces involved in the Crimean War. The commission was comprised of Maj. Richard Delafield (engineers), Maj. Alfred Mordecai (ordnance), and Capt. George B. McClellan (cavalry).

Their reports focused on tactics and hardware and did not scrutinize methods of supplying subsistence. However, the commission did note that Prussian regiments were raised from certain districts and were supplied from towns in those districts, an arrangement that encouraged the supply man-



Jefferson Davis

agers to do a good job, because they were "taking care of their own." (Dunbar Rowland, ed., Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalist: His Letters, Papers, and Speeches, Vol. II, pp. 446-48; George B. McClellan, The Report of George B. McClellan, One of the Officers Sent to the Seat of War in Europe in 1855 and 1856, pp. 23-24; Peter D. Skirbunt, Prologue to Reform: The 'Germanization' of the United States Army, 1865-1898, pp. 29-40)

1856

Food Technology: Gail Borden obtained a patent on condensed milk. During the Civil War, the government contracted with him to bring wholesome milk to the Army. (Life, Bicentennial Issue, p. 95)

1857

A NEW DEFINITION of selling an item "at cost" emerged this year. Now, "cost" excluded the transport costs. Before, "at cost" meant contract price plus the cost of transportation. (Report of the Secretary of War, 1880, Vol. I, pp. 494-95)

Food Technology: French microbiologist Louis Pasteur began perfecting his process of heating food in order to kill harmful microorganisms, a process later called "Pasteurization."

1858

Food Technology: John L. Mason invented the

Mason jar for canning.

1859

1859

Food Marketing: The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co. was founded by George Huntington Hartford and opened its first store in New York. This company was the first big retail grocery chain. Later, it would become known as A & P. (Life, Bicentennial Issue, p. 100; Audacity, Spring 1997)

1860

1860

New Food Product: H. J. Heinz began his business by selling dried, canned horseradish in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

1860

THE PUBLICATION of Scott's Military Dictionary included recipes for the military. (Goins, A History of Army Rations, p. 30)

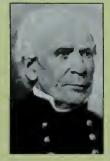
JUNE 10, 1860

BRIG. GEN. Thomas S. Jesup, the "father of

the modern Quartermaster Corps," died. He had served as the quartermaster general since 1818.

JUNE 21, 1860

ARMY ENLISTED men were authorized the issuance of potatoes three times per week. (Cassidy, Products for the Army, p. 1; J. Dyer, Subsistence Supply, II-2)



Brig. Gen. Thomas S. Jesup

JUNE 28, 1860

NOV. 6, 1860

THE NEW quartermaster general was Brig. Gen.

Joseph E. Johnston, who would soon become the first general-in-chief of the Confederate States of America and would eventually lead rebel forces against the United States.



U.S. History: Abraham Lincoln was elected sixteenth

president. Afterwards, South Carolina seceded from the Union followed by Missis-Florida, Alabama, sippi, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas.

Brig. Gen. Joseph E. **Johnston**

1857 - 1865

1858

1856

1857

COMMISSARY Fortfolio: Then and Mon EXTERIORS

INCE 1867 THERE have been hundreds of commissary sales stores, each one distinct in appearance. Early on, commissaries were placed in whatever buildings were available: old warehouses, stables, barracks, riding halls, motor pool garages, aircraft hangars, libraries, dining halls—and, in at least one instance, an old morgue.

In recent years, commissaries have been designed and built from the ground up as grocery stores, and efforts have been made to match the store's architecture to that of the installation. This portfolio gives some idea as to the amazing range of buildings that have been used as commissaries.



► FORT MCNAIR, Washington, D.C. Two 1920s-era stables were converted into a single commissary building in the 1940s. Despite several subsequent renovations, evidence of its architectural origins survived—including a roofline distinctive of stables, and the slate roof with metal "snowbirds" (inset), dated 1923. Still frequently used in modern construction, snowbirds prevent large, dangerous chunks of melting snow and ice from falling off a roof. Today, Fort McNair's former commissary is home to the U.S. Army's Center for Military History. DeCA photos: Pete Skirbunt



▲ 1999: VOGELWEH, Germany. The unique entrance and exit at this commissary provides natural light as well as an intriguing roofline. DeCA-Europe



▲ 2000: JACKSONVILLE, Florida. The commissary at Naval Air Station Jacksonville has thirteen checkouts, 12,985 square feet of sales area and 18,225 square feet of warehouse space.

DeCA photo courtesy of the facilities directorate



▲ 1957: CHATEAUROUX,

France. The store was one of ten established in postwar France.

Military Market, Army Times Publications



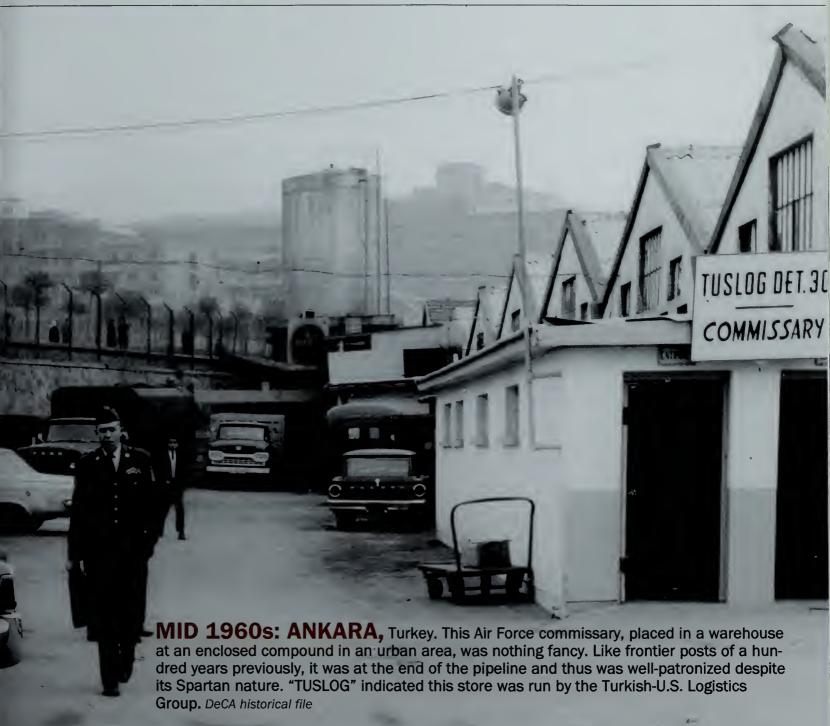


◆ 1946: TOKYO,

Japan. The commissary in downtown Tokyo occupied three floors of a department store on the Ginza Strip. (See page 174 for a photo of the store's grand opening.)

U.S. Army Quartermaster Museum

4 2001: OCEANA, Virginia. This state-of-the-art facility at Naval Air Station Oceana included the exterior look of a traditional Virginia mansion. DeCA photo: Pete Skirbunt







▲ LATE 1880s: FORT CONCHO, Texas. This quartermaster storehouse was built next to an identical building used as a storehouse and sales store, 1868-1889. Fort Concho National Historic Landmark, courtesy Evelyn Lemons



▶ 1996: SAGAMIHARA,

Japan. This commissary was built in 1996 to replace a store that dated back to the 1950s. (See photograph on page v) DeCA photo: Sam Cagle





■ 1958: ELLSWORTH Air Force Base, South Dakota. This store was wooden, crowded and antiquated—like most other stores at the time. (For a view of the interior of this store, see page 96) DeCA historical file



◆ 1965-66: FORT BRAGG,

North Carolina. This, the main store at Fort Bragg, had four annexes in 1965 (including one located on neighboring Pope Air Force Base) to handle a large customer base. In 1974, a new store, now known as the North Post commissary, replaced the facility shown here. In 2000, the "superstore" on Fort Bragg South Post opened and replaced the old annexes. DeCA historical file



Exteriors Exteriors

▶ 1998: RAF FAIRFORD, England. The modern store at Royal Air Force Base Fairford is a far cry from the warehouses used to house the store in the 1970s at RAF WETHERSFIELD ▼ (shown below right). RAF Fairford photo: Tim Ford. Wethersfield: DeCA historical file





▲ 1919: PROVINCETOWN,

Massachusetts. This building, to all appearances a private residence, actually contained a Navy commissary. Its housing was similar to thousands of "mom and pop" grocery stores in cities and towns across the country. U.S. Navy Historical Center





▲ 1984: MAINZ, Germany. This store served the Mainz community from 1952 until its closure in 1995. TSA photo, DeCA historical file.

▶ 1921: BALBOA, Panama. The Panama Canal Commission ran this store, touted at the time as one of the most modern in the world. The Army took over its operation in 1979 Panama Canal Commission





▲ 1966: CLARK Air Force Base, Philippines. At that time, this store was built from three connected Quonset huts. It was placed in service in 1955 and would be replaced by a large, modern facility in 1984. It is shown here in its holiday contest decorations. DeCA historical file





◆ 1965: FORT LEAVENWORTH.

Kansas. Like many posts, Fort
Leavenworth has had many commissaries, including this one in use in 1965.
Customers drove up to a partially covered area on the side of the building to have their groceries loaded into their cars. Military prisoners convicted of nonviolent crimes performed a community service by placing groceries in the customers' cars, but the prisoners could not receive tips. Frontier Army Museum, Fort
Leavenworth, courtesy Lt. Col. Doug Friedly

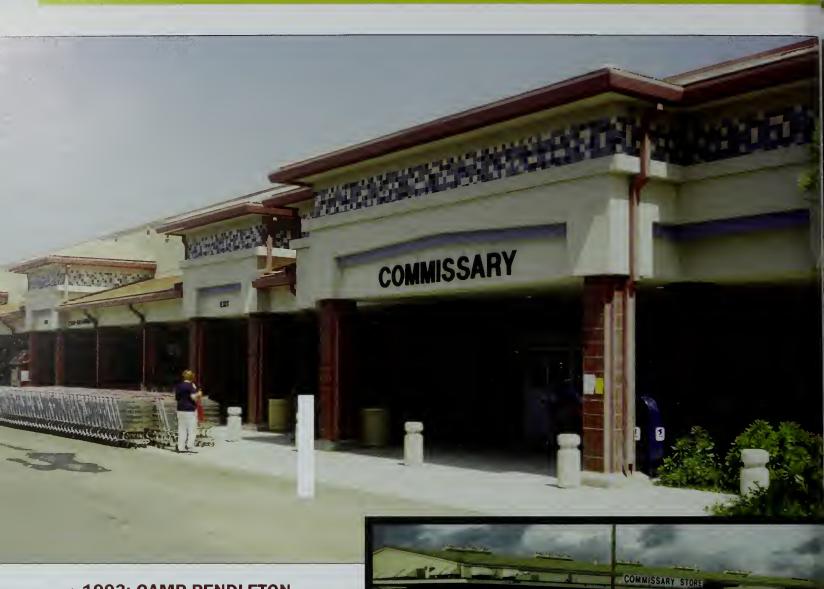
4 2002: PICATINNY Arsenal, New Jersey. DeCA opened this state-of-the-art facility in 1998. It was designed in the "urban warehouse" style to blend with other structures at the Armament Research, Development, and Engineering Center (ARDEC). The store it replaced had been named best in its region in 1996, and the new store soon won honors as the best small store in the United States in 1999 and 2005. DeCA photo courtesy of Picatinny Arsenal commissary



◆ 1999: OSAN

Air Base, Korea. Volunteer baggers around the world are especially appreciated when the weather is bad. The baggers brave heat, wind, rain, and—as seen here—snow and ice, and they work solely for tips.

DeCA photo courtesy of Osan commissary



▲ 1993: CAMP PENDLETON,

California. DeCA replaced its old store with a new commissary in 1993. Photo: Ken Perrotte The "old store," built in 1952 and shown here in 1992, was one of three stores at this large Marine Corps base in California. DeCA historical file



▲ 1957: MYRTLE BEACH Air Force Base. This facility in South Carolina had a rustic setting. Usually, commissaries were surrounded only by warehouses or pavement. Constructed in 1942, this building had a total area of 3,924 square feet. The facility was cooled by a single overhead fan, and there was no heat. Base engineers placed the building's value at \$2,354.40. It was replaced by a new store a year after this photo was taken. DeCA historical file





◆ 1959: CORPUS CHRISTI,

Texas. This store had a semicircular portico that gave it a nautical look.

DeCA historical file, courtesy of Naval Air Station Corpus Christi commissary



▲ 1961: PORT HUENEME, California. For the Navy SeaBee Center, this store was extensively renovated in 1960. It was replaced by a new facility in 1973, which was twice as large as the store shown here.

Military Market, Army Times Publications



◆ 1997: FORT RILEY,

Kansas, has had at least seven different food stores, including a sutler's store, several originally built as riding halls and stables (see pages 72-73) and another (shown here) designed exclusively as a commissary, that opened in 1997. DeCA photo: Pete Skirbunt



▲ 1994: CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas. This modern store opened in 1994, replacing the nautical look with a more colorful, state-of-the-art facility. DeCA photo: Lowell Farmer



▲ 2001: CUTLER, Maine. This small store served the naval computer and telecommunications station at Cutler from 1960 to 2001.

DeCA photo courtesy of Cutler commissary





▲ LIVORNO - CAMP DARBY. This large warehouse housed the store at Camp Darby, Livorno, Italy, in 1960. ▼ Remodeled and modernized in 1991, its entrance is pictured below as it appeared in 2001.

Photos courtesy of Camp Darby commissary





▲ 2003: CAIRO, Egypt. To change the store's appearance, commissary personnel used their local culture in an effort to make the American community aware of Egyptian history. Constructed by the commissary staff and designed by the produce manager, Mohamed Emad, and the warehouse supervisor, Gamal Hasaballa, the project consists of two lonic columns, the "Eye Of Horus" (a traditional symbol of good fortune) and the words "Cairo Commissary" rendered in hieroglyphics. Within the entrance, a metal decoration depicts the three Pyramids of Giza and the DeCA seal.

DeCA photo: Mohamed Abou El Enein,

store administrator

◆ 1989: CAMP PAGE, Korea. This annex of the Yongsan commissary was truly a makeshift store, but it did the job. TSA opened this store in 1987 in a building constructed in 1955. It closed after fifty years of service to its customers in 2005. TSA photo, DeCA historical file



▲ 1999: ANCHORAGE AREA,

Alaska. This modern store took the place of commissaries at Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson. DeCA photo: Rick Brink

◆ FORT BENJAMIN HARRISON,

Indiana, mid 1960s (left). This facility originally opened in 1955 and remained in use until 1983. DeCA historical file



3

THE CIVIL WAR: 1861 - 1865 TURNING POINT FOR SUTLERS

T TOOK A CIVIL WAR in which more than 600,000 men died and another 412,000 were wounded to draw attention to the daily privations suffered by the common soldier.

It would be nice to be able to say that once the American people and their representatives were aware of the soldiers' problems, they took immediate action to correct everything. Unfortunately, that can't be said with much accuracy. For years, the enlisted soldiers' pay continued to be miserable, while their living conditions remained Spartan. Officers and civilians alike often treated them as second-class citizens.

In one respect, however, things would improve, and fairly quickly at that. Two years following the war, enlisted men would be able to buy groceries from their post commissary storehouse, at cost, just as their officers had been able to do since 1825.





During the Civil War, Americans served in uniform—either Blue or Gray—in unprecedented numbers and in unmatched proportions. The ratio of uniformed men to the total population was higher in this war than in any other U.S. conflict in history. Just about every family had someone in uniform—a husband, father, son, brother, uncle, nephew or an in-law—and that, in turn, meant that every family took a personal interest in the war.

Letters from the winter camps and summer campaigns were read by concerned families, hushed and gathered together for courage to learn whatever they could about their loved ones. It was often then that they found out about the soldiers' common complaints. Most of the soldiers' grief had to do with how they viewed the war, their low pay, the officers they considered to be incompetent, and, of course, their food and dealings with the sutlers.

The soldiers' families learned a great deal about the soldiers' daily hardships, and were often upset and angered on their behalf. They discovered how the soldiers ate and what they had to do in order to obtain decent food. Their anger at these discoveries, and their determination to do something about it, explains why sales commissaries were established shortly after the war.

DESPISED SUTLER

The official rations the Army was supposed to provide were lacking in taste and nutritional value, even on those rare occasions when they were available in proper quantity. Although the rations were supposedly improved, they still left a lot to be desired, especially among men who were used to eating well. Such men made up a sizable proportion of the population. Many people still lived on farms and were used to providing their own hearty meals. Since the Army seemed incapable of providing the troops with decent food on a consis-

tent basis, the men had to go elsewhere to obtain it. While in camp, soldiers often spent some of their hard-earned money at a sutler's establishment.

In 1862, Congress specified what articles the sutlers could sell. The Army provided few necessities, so the list was a



A SUTLER'S TENT. During the years 1861-67, sutlers sold everything from liquor to licorice. National Archives

real catch-all, demonstrating why sutlers are considered to be the predecessors both of the commissaries and the exchanges. The list included eleven food items, including milk, butter, and various fresh and dried fruits, but there were thirty-nine non-food necessities, every-

[IN EARLY 1863, Army of the Potomac commander Maj. Gen. Joe] Hooker ... did his best to make sure the Army was properly fed. He issued orders that flour or soft bread be distributed four times per week, fresh potatoes and vegetables twice per week, and desiccated mixed vegetables once per week. Commanders of corps, divisions, brigades, and detached commands would require any commissary officer who failed to make such issues to file a written statement from the officer in charge of the depot warehouse proving that the warehouse did not have any of the foods in question.



thing from tobacco to needles and thread.

When the list was enlarged the following year, it became obvious what items the men had been requesting. Most of the new items were foods, including fresh vegetables, eggs, fish and poultry, bologna, and dried beef. Also popular were the means of preparing and eating those foods: saucepans, coffee pots, tin plates, tin cups, knives, forks, and spoons. Socks, shirts, shoes, and undergarments made the list as well, attesting to what clothing men in the field would need to replace frequently.

The armies of the Civil War were far larger than any seen previously in North America. For this reason, sutlers in unprecedented numbers were attached to those armies—and usually to a particular regiment by special arrangement with the commanding officer—to offer sales goods with which the men could supplement their diet. Although some sutlers were patriotic, all were moved by other motives; they were in business to make a living. Some were far more concerned with making a profit than with providing a service to the men. Many of them charged high prices, supplied inferior goods, or both. The predictable result was that all sutlers suffered, fairly or not, from a group reputation that was less than stellar.

The word *sutler* itself, as has been previously noted, had its origins in a Dutch term meaning "to undertake basic (or lowly) services." That definition pretty well reflects the low esteem and downright contempt in which the soldiers held many of these merchants who, to all appearances, were getting rich off the misery of men who risked their lives in battle. Some soldiers considered them no better than leeches.

There were exceptions to this unfavorable notion, of course. One sutler actually brought out his entire stock of bread and pastries, and, throughout the course of an all-day battle, distributed them free of charge to the men of the regiment to which he was attached. Others bravely brought their line of goods into close proximity to the enemy, though it is unclear whether this was out of patriotic duty or a calculated risk to make even more of a profit.

The overwhelming perception of the men in uniform was that patriotic, generous, and brave sutlers were the exceptions, not the rule. To all indications, it was also rare to find sutlers who charged reasonable prices. One Northern newspaper correspondent reported that the usual charge was five times the worth of an article on the civilian market. Even at this exorbitant rate, the sutlers sold their goods very quickly because the soldiers were desperate for tasty, healthful foods, especially fresh fruits and vegetables. When those weren't available, canned goods were popular. Canned tomatoes and condensed milk were especially in demand, in part because they could either be consumed straight out of the can or used in a concoction such as a soup, stew, or casserole. The men often pooled their resources and cooked as a group.

THE OFFICIAL RATIONS

Despite their high prices, sutlers and bumboat operators on both sides provided valuable services because the basic rations were so sparse and unhealthful. The problem was, the services were so valuable that men were willing to pay just about anything to get their hands on some decent food, and that's where the profits were made and the charges of "price gouging" began.

Early in the war, Congress had provided for an expanded and flexible daily ration that included potatoes, beans, rice, hominy, butter, desiccated (dried and compressed) vegetables, and an extract of coffee, combined with milk and sugar. It looked good on paper. But in reality, most men seldom saw a full ration.

To its credit, Congress kept trying. The bread component was initially reduced, but it was increased again late in the war. Congress also stipulated that fresh meat should be substituted for salted meat, whenever possible. Simultaneously, in a move that was patently unpopular, Congress terminated the issuing of grog (a rum-based concoction) to ships' officers and warrant officers.

The lists of what the rations should have included were well intended, but were largely wishful thinking. What was on paper or in the regulations had always been so far removed from reality that the men had ceased to pay much attention.

The healthful items in the ration were seldom received by the men for whom they were intended. For instance, as noted earlier, the government contracted with Gail Borden for his entire output of canned evaporated milk. Unfortunately, it proved so popular that much of the milk was pilfered and resold at high prices. The men were still able to get it, but they often had to buy it from one source or another, no questions asked. Some men were, no doubt, aware that the sale wasn't quite legal or ethical and probably resented having to pay for the milk. But they were happy to get it and most didn't

inquire as to how it had been obtained.

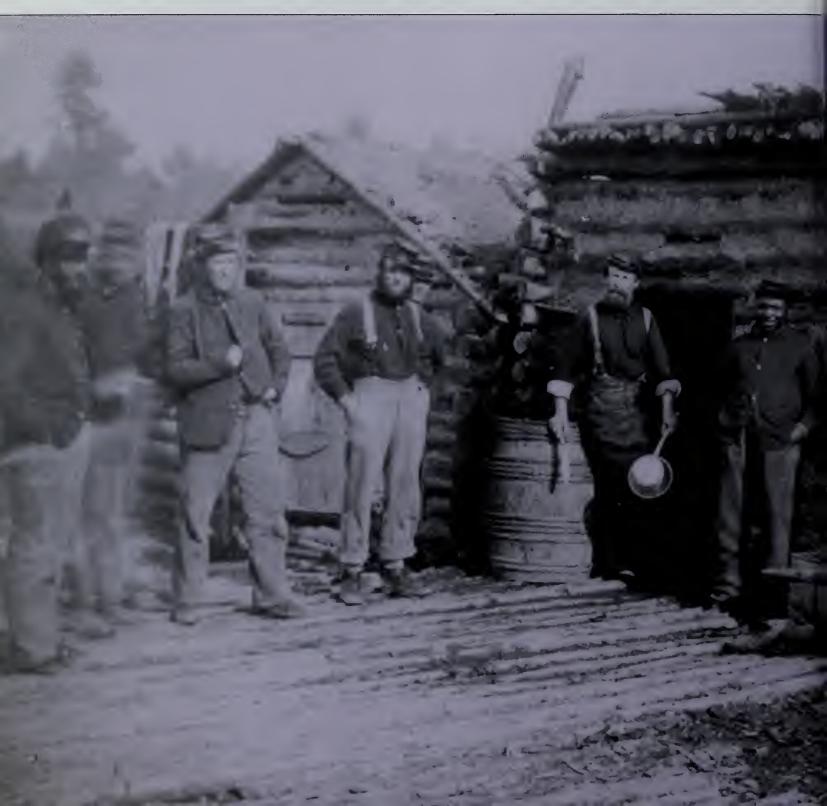
Enlightened field commanders who knew the importance of a good diet sometimes procured canned goods for the men from sources that were other than official. Along with canned tomatoes and canned evaporated milk, the men's favorites were canned beans, peas, corn, peaches, pineapples, plums, pears, cranberries, jams, and jellies. Many of these items should have been provided in the ration, but the reality was that a lot of food had been lost, stolen (and resold), or stuck in warehouses.

At all levels, many improvements were prescribed in official documents but were never implemented. For example, Congress repealed legislation that had granted sutlers a lien upon soldiers' pay. Many young soldiers were getting themselves into debt just trying to obtain decent food, and Congress, to its credit, tried to save them from themselves. However, the men still had to eat, and despite the repeal, many sutlers continued to collect directly from the men's pay. Congress also forbade sutlers to sell whiskey and other hard liquor, but in prac-

tice in the field, both buyers and sellers usually winked at this prohibition.

ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP

The government also tried to reorganize its subsistence function. In 1861, the Northern Subsistence Department numbered only twelve men, including its chief, Joseph E. Johnston. From this group, three (including Johnston) resigned to join the Confederacy. It was not an auspicious start, but better days were coming. In 1861, Brig. Gen. Montgomery C. Meigs became quar-



termaster general, and held the position until February 1882, bringing much-needed stability to the post.

In 1862, each Army corps was authorized a commissary of subsistence, who helped provide food to the men. In March 1865, the Army Appropriation Act reorganized the Subsistence Department and empowered the secretary of war to appoint chief commissaries and assistants for various military divisions. It also stipulated, once again, that officers could purchase rations from commissary storehouses on

credit. Congress added twelve commissary officers to the Subsistence Department. They were sorely needed, but they weren't nearly enough.

'IRON RATIONS'

Troops on the march could not always be issued certain portions of their regular rations. At the end of the month the unissued rations reverted to the government—an obvious injustice and disservice to the men in the field. However, not everyone complained, because most

knew what they were missing.

When the Army was on the move, the men received marching rations, popularly called "iron rations." This ration usually consisted solely of hardtack or hard bread, black coffee, sugar (sometimes), and some sort of dried meat, either salt beef, salt pork, or bacon.

It's unclear how they came to be called iron rations, but it's easy to imagine. The best explanations are that one needed to have a stomach of iron to eat them, that one's stomach felt like iron once the ration



was eaten, or that they were a solid diet for men who had to march long and fight hard. In the wisdom of the day, many people thought the ration contained healthful, solid foods, good for young men who needed to keep their energy levels high.

There was no specific regulation that had called for an official marching ration as opposed to an official daily ration, but the creation of a special ration for long marches marked the first time that rations had been developed and issued for specific situations.

More than one soldier later confided that he believed his life had been shortened by the whole Army experience, from sleeping on the damp ground to trying to digest the food. Union Brig. Gen. Charles Francis Adams Jr. later wrote that the problem with the iron ration was that there was too much protein and caffeine. There was nothing mild or soothing for stomachs filled with fats and acids, and not nearly enough roughage: "My intestines were actually corroded with concentrated nourishment. I needed to live on bread, vegetables, and tea; I did live on pork, coffee, spirits, and tainted water."

Adams remembered the coffee because it was the one liquid refreshment the Northern soldiers could always count on. Confederates concocted their own coffee out of chicory nuts and the like, or else they clandestinely traded for it with any Yanks willing to break the no-fraternization rules. These trades took place between the lines, often while on picket duty, and frequently at night. Usually, Southern tobacco

was traded for Northern coffee.

Soldiers drank a lot of coffee. The men figured they might as well make hot coffee, since the water usually had to be boiled before drinking, anyway. The practice of boiling water was especially essential in winter camps, when thousands of men occupied the same ground, used the same privies, and washed themselves and their clothes in the same rivers and streams from which they took their drinking water. Using the boiled water to make coffee created a fine, energizing aroma and a good-tasting stimulant that would warm them up in cold or damp weather. Coffee was issued as whole beans that the men ground themselves. No doubt that helped to preserve the flavor. When on the march, even during short rests, hundreds of men started little fires and boiled water for a quick cup of coffee. It took only minutes to fix and provided a quick energy boost. Some men liked it with condensed milk and sugar; others took it plain. Not surprisingly, it was during the Civil War that drinking coffee became the great American habit that it is today.

Just about the entire Army, and the Navy too, drank coffee. There was little else to be had except for an occasional can of milk, the Navy's grog ration, or perhaps some homemade alcohol. The latter would likely get a man in trouble, give him a terrible hangover, or both. It wasn't called "bust head," "pop skull," or "red eye" for nothing, though some men called the better batches "O! Be Joyful." While some men found solace in a bottle, most managed to avoid it, at least as a regular



practice. Never knowing what the morning would bring, they wanted to face it with clear eyes and a clear head.

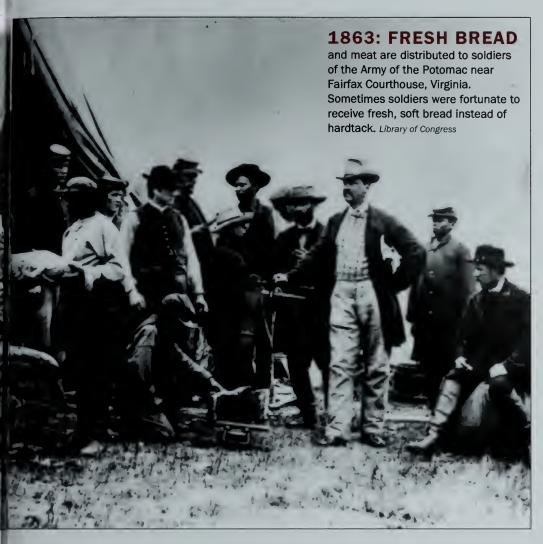
Beans seem to have been one of the favorite staples of the ration. They were easy to cook, usually good tasting, and combined the nutritional values of meat and vegetables. If potatoes could be had, they were usually boiled and used in a stew with whatever meat and vegetables were handy. Salt pork, also known as "sowbelly," was favored even over the bacon. The salt pork was tasty and kept well on the march, while bacon seemed to get everything greasy.

HARDTACK

It's hard to say which of the rations was the most disliked, because there were so many candidates for the honor. Hardtack was probably the most frequent target of complaints, but it could be a lifesaver. It was widely produced and distributed. Though there were minor variations, it was generally a lightly salted, three-inch-square cracker, about one-half-inch thick. It was easy to get



1863: A SKETCH of the Army of the Potomac's Commissary Department headquarters, showing beef carcasses, miscellaneous barrels, and hardtack or "cracker" boxes, was made by famed Civil War artist A. R. Waud. Waud's work usually appeared in *Harper's Weekly Magazine*, where this drawing was first published, in the April **18**, **1863**, issue. *Library of Congress*



tired of these crackers, so a hungry man could usually find someone to give him a day's supply of the things. Hardtack was so hard and solid, it was said that if you ate it on the march, you had to keep it in your mouth for half an hour before commencing to chew.

Hardtack was apparently all right to eat when it was fresh, but that was seldom or never. Since it was easily portable it was eaten at all times of day, in camp, on the march, or even while waiting to go into battle. Often men would crumble it into their coffee or mix it with some hot water and vegetables for soup. Other times they fried it in grease or toasted it on a stick. It often got moldy, but if they were hungry enough, the men would scrape off the mold and eat the cracker anyway. If it was infested with weevils (which it often was), the easiest remedy was to crumble it into coffee and skim the weevils off the top. Overall, in all its forms, the stuff was, according to one veteran, "certainly indigestible enough to satisfy the cravings of

the most ambitious dyspeptic." But it was better than nothing.

Salt beef was another matter entirely. Salt was the day's great preservative, but the salt beef was so salty that it had to be soaked for hours in running water to be palatable. It smelled terrible when it was cooked. Sometimes when a particularly obnoxious piece of it was given to the men, they held a mock funeral for it, usually within sight of their officers. When fresh beef was obtained, it wasn't always welcome. When they could be had, herds of cattle were driven along with the Army, and slaughtered at day's end. Meat sliced up after a long march was particularly unpalatable. One man described it as "odious beef, served quivering from an animal heated by the long day's march." But when good steaks were available, each man would eagerly broil his portion on a stick.

Bruce Catton, whose many books on the Civil War are well-known classics, summarized the food situation this way: "As a general thing, even though the coffee was good and the baked beans were palatable, the food the Civil War soldier lived on ranged from mediocre to downright awful. Looking at the combination of unbalanced rations, incompetent cooks, and crackers fried in pork fat, one wonders how the men kept their health. The answer, of course, is that many of them didn't. There were many reasons for the terrible prevalence of sickness in that army ... but faulty diet must have been one of the most important."

OFFICERS' RATIONS

As would be expected, the commissioned officers were better off than the enlisted men. An officer could often get better prices from the sutler, sometimes because he granted the sutler exclusive rights to sell to his regiment. Because of their many friends and connections (as well as higher pay), officers had additional sources of food as well. John D. Billings, a Union veteran, later remembered that the officers didn't draw rations as the enlisted did, but instead had a cash allowance, based on rank, with which to purchase supplies from the brigade commissary. At that time, a "commissary" was an individual who kept stores for sale, but only at cost, for the convenience of the officers. Normally, regimental and battery quartermasters obtained their basic ration supplies for the enlisted men and NCOs from the brigade commissary. Sometimes, in a move that predated commissary sales stores, the men could also buy additional items at cost if they had a written order signed by a commissioned officer.

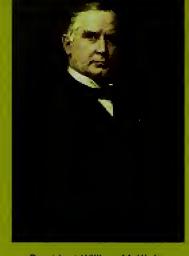
Billings was one of the few who went on record defending the sutlers: "...[The sutler] filled a need recognized ... by Army regulations. Such a person was considered a convenience if not a necessity ... no soldier was compelled to patronize him ... when one carefully considers the expense of transporting his goods to the Army, the wastage ... from exposure to the weather, the cost of frequent removals, and the risk ... I do not believe that sutlers as a class can be justly accused of overcharging."

Whether or not the sutlers deserved

Future President Makes a Name at **ANTIETAM**

HE BLOODIEST single day of the American Civil War was September 17, 1862. In all the battles fought during that conflict whose very names made a generation of Americans weep, not one—not even Gettysburg, Cold Harbor, Chickamauga, or Shiloh—had produced a day that could compare with this one.

The battle fought that day was called both **Antietam**, for the creek around which the battle raged, and **Sharpsburg**, for the



President William McKinley

nearby town. Had fortunes taken a slight turn, it's possible the war would have been considerably shortened. The Union Army of the Potomac, commanded by Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, came close to winning a decisive victory over Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, but the opportunity was missed by a matter of minutes. Fatigue, poor timing, bad communication, and bad judgment let the chance slip away, and the war would continue.

Late in the day, after capturing a bridge over the Antietam, the Union Army's left wing, commanded by Brig. Gen. Ambrose Burnside, could have advanced and captured Sharpsburg. This action would have put the Union Army squarely on the line of Lee's retreat and would have won the battle for the North. For a short while, only 2,400 Confederates stood in the way of Burnside's 12,000 Federals, but his

leading regiments had to stop. Poorly led, low on ammunition, and tired from the fierce fight they'd had taking the bridge (to this day, called Burnside's Bridge), they had to re-form their ranks before advancing.

A traffic jam resulted when thousands of men tried to come across the twelve-foot-wide bridge, and thousands more searched for a spot to ford the creek. So, rather than 12,000 men, only 3,000 were actually across the bridge, ready to advance, and Burnside held even those back for two hours, waiting for the others. Thinking his role was to cause a diversion, he did not recognize the opportunity fate had dropped into his lap. If the men had been led forward with alacrity, they still might have won the day, even after the delay. But Confederate reinforcements came up, barely in time, to hold off the Federals—and thereby extend the war.

On the Antietam battlefield today there is a monument at the top of the hill overlooking Burnside's Bridge, but the inscription makes no mention of Burnside's lost opportunity. Instead, it recounts the bravery shown by William McKinley, the nineteen-year-old commissary sergeant of the 23rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry, known to the regiment as Bill. McKinley could have stayed in the rear lines where it was safe, but instead initiated one of the few recorded instances in this war when hot food was actually brought to men under fire. Without orders, he filled two wagons with hot food and coffee and, with the help of some unknown stragglers, proceeded to the front lines. One of the wagons was disabled by enemy fire, but he got the other to the top of the hill, where he served food and coffee to the tired, hungry soldiers of his regiment, who were still awaiting orders to advance.

The regimental colonel told the governor of Ohio about the incident, and the governor promoted McKinley to second lieutenant.

McKinley later gallantly distinguished himself in battle and became a

their miserable reputation was a matter of both opinion and personal experience. It is a fact, though, that few of them went on to fame and fortune after the war. Critics would say the reason was that the sutlers were unambitious, conniving men, whose only real talent was taking advantage of people who were in an impossible situation.

While plenty of their former customers on both sides went on to great things or high office, only one sutler is known to have done so. This was James A. Bailey, a sutler's clerk, who went into the circus business. Somehow, it seems appropriate that he eventually became the partner of P. T. Barnum, thus forming the famous Barnum and Bailey Circus. It was Barnum who was credited with popularizing the phrase "There's a sucker born every minute." Doubtlessly, many Civil War soldiers would have agreed that old P. T.

could not have found a more fitting partner than a former sutler.

BAD CONTRACTORS, BAD RATIONS

Billings was clearly in the minority in his favorable opinion of the sutlers, but he obviously had given the matter a lot of measured, reasonable thought. He instead found great fault with the contractors who were supposed to deliver the official rations: "Unwholesome rations were not the rule, they were the exception, and it was not the fault of the government that these were furnished, but very often the intent of rascally, thieving contractors who supplied them, for which they received the price of good rations."

One such exception occurred at the Union Army's supply depot at City Point, Virginia, when an inspector found the hard bread cargo of two entire ships to be full of weevils. The inspector notified Lt. Gen.

Ulysess S. Grant, the Union general-inchief, and Grant himself refused to let it be landed at the depot, "greatly to the discomfiture of the contractor, who had been attempting to bulldoze the inspector to pass it."

The Yankees were not alone, either; Southern soldiers had even less food, and therefore had even more to complain about. One song popular among Rebel soldiers for its realistic appraisal of their war effort, "The Soldiers' Lament," noted: "And as for food, we've not enough; the bread is stale, the meat is tough. But as for that, we won't complain, in hopes we'll get good food again."

Food problems were far worse among the Confederates for many reasons. The Southerners had fewer rail lines on which to move supplies, and, as the war progressed, the Northern vise tightened. As they began to lose territory and the ability



TODAY, AT THE ANTIETAM Battlefield, there's a monument (RIGHT photo) to the courage of William McKinley, a commissary sergeant, who later went on to become the twenty-fifth president of the United States. Photo: Pete Skirbunt ABOVE: President Abraham Lincoln visited Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan (sixth from left) and his staff. At far right is McClellan's aide at the time, then-Lt. George Armstrong Custer. National Archives BOTTOM: the future president as a soldier in the Union Army. National Archives OPPOSITE PAGE: McKinley portrait. Courtesy of www.WhiteHouse.gov

captain. He was promoted to brevet major by President Abraham Lincoln, two weeks before Lincoln's death.

McKinley was more than the most famous commissary sergeant in American history; he went on to become the twenty-fifth president of the United States in 1896. But there is more to the story. The 23rd Ohio was unique in having within its ranks *two* future presidents of the United States. The regimental colonel who told the Ohio governor about McKinley was Rutherford B. Hayes, who rose to brevet major general during the war and became the nineteenth president in 1877.





to produce enough food, the Rebel armies began to slowly starve. Ultimately, this proved as fatal to the Southern cause as anything the Yankees could do to them in battle.

Still, the Confederates were able to keep a grim sense of humor about things. One officer, noting that his men were being provided beef that was incredibly tough, claimed he was going to requisition metal files so his men could sharpen their teeth in order to chew the stuff. The Southern cornbread ration was hard, tended to be moldy, and "looked like it had cobwebs in it."

Later in the conflict, "improved" rations for both sides added bread, pork, bacon, or salt beef, but little mention was made of any fruit, vegetable, or anything else that would sit easily on the stomach and help the whole digestive system. It didn't really matter a great deal, though, since the

changes were made mostly on paper.

The Northern boys at least had an outside chance of seeing the full ration every now and then; Southern soldiers, especially late in the war, knew full well that the official additions were about as substantial as the will-o'-the-wisps that haunted the swamps and woods around their camps.

TRANSPORT

This period was the dawning of the age of steam-driven, military water and rail transport, so it would seem that there should have been little trouble getting food to the men. Both sides learned early in the war how much faster it was to ride a train or a steamboat than to march all day; supplies could be quickly moved as well. There were two problems: First, rivers didn't always go where you wanted them to go; second, the vast majority of the nation's railroad tracks were in the North, while

most of the campaigns took place in the South. Thus, for a time, it remained difficult to supply an army that wasn't camped near a railway or a navigable river, so the rations and other desperately needed supplies were often slow in catching up to an army on the move.

But both armies learned to quickly build new rail lines, rebuild bridges, stretches of track, and docks that had been torn up by the enemy. The real problems had less to do with transport than they did with what took place either before shipment or after the trains and boats had arrived at their destinations. Boxcars and steamboats were unloaded with alacrity, often by freed slaves. Then, one of three things happened: The foodstuffs went where they were needed; they disappeared entirely; or they were caught in a bureaucratic shuffle and ended up in a warehouse—perhaps close by, perhaps many miles away.

Meanwhile, the men for whom the food had been intended went foraging or went hungry.

These problems were caused by terrible incompetence, rampant dishonesty, or piles of paperwork that moved like glaciers. Problems caused by paperwork shuffling were hard to avoid. Often as not, by the time supplies arrived for a given unit, that unit had moved on, and whatever unit was nearby often ended up getting the other's food. This musical chairs-like manner of issuing subsistence tended to balance out over the course of the war, but there was real trouble when shortages occurred before a battle.

It was not good to send men into a fight when they were hungry, although on more than one memorable occasion, the hunger actually acted as an incentive, and the hungry men ended up capturing the enemy's supplies. But the power of the grumbling stomach was the exception, not the rule. A hungry soldier was usually an

unhappy, sluggish soldier, with poor morale, no ambition, and a cynical attitude toward his officers. He was as likely to desert as to fight.

SUPPLY DEPOTS

During the war, hundreds of places functioned as supply depots for one side or the other. The most famous, the Union Army's Virginia depots at Aquia Creek on the Potomac and City Point on the James, brought in supplies by water and distributed them with a military railroad system that ran, respectively, to the camps near Fredericksburg and the siege works around Petersburg. Both rivers were crowded with traffic. In fact, for a year, City Point was one of the busiest ports in the world.

Both depots were not only crowded with warehouses and storehouses, but they were glutted with supplies. One Confederate described it as "not just abundance, but extravagance." City Point also had a huge bakery facility that could turn out fresh breads and pastries in the morning, and the men in the trenches and gunpits could be eating them that same afternoon. While the Union men enjoyed the abundance, the Confederates, who were on half-rations or less just a few miles away, could not hope to match what the Union could do for its men.

CAMPAIGNS AND FOOD

Early in the war, Joseph P. Taylor, the commissary general, told Secretary of War Simon Cameron that although the Subsistence Department procured most of its rations by contract, the increased need engendered by the war would have to be met by additional purchases on the open market. He figured the bulk of subsistence supplies were best procured in large cities by officers who would supervise the goods' packing. Subsequently, the department purchased its subsistence at the public markets of the largest cities in the nation, a case of government funds going directly into the civilian economy.

Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, who appreciated the value of a fighting man's full stomach, assumed control of the Union armies in 1861. Whatever his other faults, no one doubted his ability to properly train, equip, and supply his army. His men were well clothed and well fed, which contributed immeasurably to their morale. He became so wildly popular with the men that he believed himself to be the North's hero, chosen by destiny to lead the war effort.

Even though he was licked and decisively driven away from the Confederate capital during the Seven Days' Battles, the men remained loyal to him because of his efforts on their behalf. Later, following the Union defeat at the Second battle of Manassas, McClellan was able to draw upon the men's loyalty to him as he pulled together a fragmented, demoralized force in time to thwart a Rebel invasion of the North. He intercepted Lee's army and fought the Confederates to a standoff at the Battle of Antietam, the bloodiest single day of the war. That battle may well have saved the Union, and it gave President Abraham Lincoln the success he needed to issue the Emancipation Proclamation.



1863: 'HAUPT LINE.' Men of the Railroad Construction Corps work on the rail line between Aquia Creek Landing and Fredericksburg, Virginia, probably in the early months of 1863. This line carried supplies from the Union Army depot at Aquia Creek to camps near Fredericksburg in 1862-63. The name on the locomotive, "General Haupt," refers to Herman Haupt, who oversaw the railways. He is seen here on top of the slope with boots, dark coat, dark hat, and beard. President Abraham Lincoln considered Haupt a railroad genius. National Archives

Eventually, Lincoln fired McClellan for moving his magnificent army so slowly that the Confederate cavalry had literally run circles around it. Angered, McClellan would later run for the presidency against Lincoln. Ironically, despite his popularity with the troops, McClellan lost decisively, largely because his old armies voted against him. But there is little doubt that of all the generals on both sides, McClellan's concern for the welfare of his troops earned him a devotion unmatched by anyone except Gen. Robert E. Lee, commander of the Confederacy's Army of Northern Virginia.

Congress helped McClellan's efforts by establishing a commissary of subsistence for each brigade; but after McClellan left, it was up to his successors to do something with them. Under Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside, the Army of the Potomac experienced major subsistence problems at Falmouth, Virginia. The army was first demoralized by a defeat in the Battle of Fredericksburg and later exhausted and embittered by a long, fruitless march in terrible weather (it became known as the "Mud March"). Fights broke out when some regiments received their rations and others didn't. Morale was sinking to an alltime low. "Never were we any worse off for supplies," wrote one soldier from Massachusetts.

At Falmouth, as at other places throughout the war, the problem was not the inability of the Army to procure food, because there was plenty of food at the storehouses just a few miles away. Rather, the problem was the Army's incredible inability to simply move the food from the storage points to the troops who needed it. Someone of comparatively low rank but great responsibility who knew it was there just needed to give the order or fill out a form to get it to the men. Far too often, that never happened.

On many occasions, the food that did get through was insufficient and poorly balanced and consisted mostly of salt pork, hardtack, and coffee. Sick men got the same rations as healthy ones, no matter what their ailment—even if it was scurvy, a disease known to be cured by a steady diet of vegetables and fruits.



1863: CLERKS AT AQUIA. Civilian commissary department clerks and their "servant" pose with their stock at Aquia Creek Landing, Virginia, in February. Had they been Southerners, these men almost certainly would have been in uniform; such was the difference in population that the Union could afford to have the majority of its men remain civilians. As historian Shelby Foote has noted, the Union fought "with one hand tied behind its back." The point was that it really didn't need to use two. The servant, meanwhile, appears to be a young boy; it certainly seems these men took advantage of him. Making him their personal servant was only a short step up from his remaining a slave. Most runaways had no other place to go and were willing, if not downright happy, to stay with the Army, helping in whatever way they could to win the war that was to bring them freedom. When this photo was taken, the Emancipation Proclamation was one month old. It's not evident that these men took it seriously.

Other common sicknesses were malnutrition, dysentery, constipation, and diarrhea, all caused or exacerbated by faulty diet. Yet no one with authority to do anything seemed to make the connection between illness and the food. Army commanders couldn't be bothered; they were far too busy with strategy and tactics to worry about the details of filling their men's bellies. Unfortunately, few in their chain of command seemed to have either the authority or the gumption to do anything about it.

In the spring of 1863, Maj. Gen. Joe Hooker, Burnside's replacement as commander of the Army of the Potomac, discovered some of the officers who had been designated as commissaries of subsistence were corrupt and using the system, or lack of it, to their personal advantage. These officers had falsified monthly records to show the troops had received the food. There was, as yet, no system of monthly vouchers, and the system that existed was

temptingly lucrative. The officers were lining their own pockets while selling fresh and desiccated vegetables to civilians; indeed, some of the buyers were Confederate sympathizers.

Hooker was able to combat this corruption and did his best to make sure the Army was properly fed. He issued orders that flour or soft bread be distributed four times per week, fresh potatoes and vegetables twice per week, and desiccated mixed vegetables once per week. Commanders of corps, divisions, brigades, and detached commands would require any commissary officer who failed to make such issues to file a written statement from the officer in charge of the depot warehouse proving that the warehouse did not have any of the foods in question.

Hooker also required each regimental commander to provide company cooks so the men would not have to cook for themselves. The cooks were often enlisted men pulled from the ranks for a two-month



1864: RAIL SUPPLY.

"Not just abundance, but extravagance." That comment, made about the supply depot at City Point, Virginia, could well have been made about any number of Union supply depots. ABOVE: Laborersmany of whom could well be freed, runaway slaves-pose atop subsistence supplies at an unidentified Union depot. Many of these boxes were probably filled with hardtack, but the Union had supplies of all types in great quantities. RIGHT: Union supplies piled in great abundance at Stoneman's Station, 1863. Named for cavalry general George Stoneman, this station was a few miles north of Fredericksburg on the Richmond, Fredericksburg and

Potomac Railroad line from the main depot at Aquia Creek. The railroad, civilian-owned in Richmond, was confiscated by the Army and renamed the "Acquia Creek (this was the 1862 spelling) and Fredericksburg Rail Road." While the Union had little trouble getting supplies to the theater of war, it had major problems in getting it from storehouses, depots, or stations like this one to the men on the march or in camps or hospitals who needed it.



Note: There seem to be "ghosts" in this view because photographs of that era required exposures of five to thirty seconds; anyone who moved would appear as a phantom. The two "ghosts" here are in reality probably only one person, either not knowing or not caring that a photograph was being made. Posed portraits of the era appear stiff and unnatural today because the subjects were holding their pose for as long as a half-minute.

National Archives

assignment in the mess kitchen. After a moderate amount of training they could cook fresh vegetables and use the desiccated vegetables to make soups and stews. When fresh meat was available, they could do something more imaginative than fry it in pork fat, as the soldiers themselves had often done.

Like so many others, Hooker was unable to win a single battle against Lee's army, and he, too, would get fired. But he had fed the men well, which certainly didn't hurt their morale, and they managed to hold together well enough to win the Battle of Gettysburg just a few days after he left.

KEY CAMPAIGNS DEPENDED ON FOOD

Two campaigns that were together the turning points of the war, the campaigns around Vicksburg, Mississippi, and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, were both heavily

influenced by the Confederate Army's shortage of food. So, too, was the campaign that sealed the fate of the Confederacy: Sherman's March to the Sea.

Lee's army in Pennsylvania, operating in enemy territory, could not long sustain itself off the land, since the population was hostile and hid or destroyed a lot of what the Confederates would otherwise have confiscated. (Actually, they paid for the goods with Confederate money, worthless in Pennsylvania.) Therefore, Lee felt pressured into attempting to win a major victory before his army was truly ready; the positioning of the armies on the second and third days at Gettysburg was very disadvantageous to the Confederates, but Lee insisted on attacking anyway, hoping to break through and bring a quick end to the war. He failed.

The besieged city of Vicksburg, meanwhile, was effectively cut off from supply, and that's what eventually forced its surrender. Ironically, the city's surrender was being culminated at the very moment that Confederate soldiers were forming for their ill-fated attack on the last day at Gettysburg—an event that would go down in history as Pickett's Charge.

Eighteen months later, Union Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman began his march to the sea through Georgia from Atlanta to Savannah. This campaign was "total war" directed at the infrastructure of factories, railways, warehouses, farms, and plantations. It was designed to destroy the South's ability to wage war and the civilians' will to resist.

Sherman's army marched overland in a line 60 miles wide for 300 miles, from Atlanta to Savannah, destroying everything of any use to the enemy armies, crippling the Confederacy's ability to ship food to its armies. Maj. Gen. Phil

Sheridan did the same thing in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, where it was said a crow would need to carry its own rations when Sheridan was finished.

Sherman is still roundly hated throughout the South for his campaign. He defended his actions, saying, "War is cruel, you cannot refine it," and claimed he had actually saved lives on both sides by getting the war over faster.

Lack of food was also an issue at prisoner of war camps in both the North and the South. There is no doubt that the prisoners were generally treated poorly and lived in foul conditions.

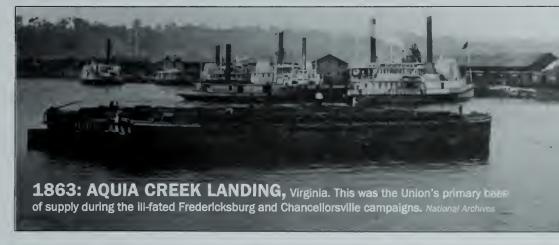
The most infamous prison of all, Andersonville, in Georgia, was the site of numerous cases of starvation. Photographs of the men emerging alive from there prove they were little more than skeletons. They bring to mind photographs of the holocaust victims of World War II.

The excuse the South offered was that there was not enough food to feed its own men, much less give adequate rations to prisoners. Conditions were miserable at many other prison camps, on both sides, and it seems that food for prisoners wasn't even much of an afterthought.

CORRUPTION AND INDIAN UPRISING IN MINNESOTA

While the Civil War raged on, something happened in Minnesota that would set the course of postwar American history for decades to come—and it involved food.

An Indian uprising took place in 1862



because the Sioux on the reservation in the southwestern part of the state were not receiving the money and provisions promised them by treaty. This was the work of a corrupt Indian agent and several traders who took the money and sold the goods to other parties for a substantial profit. This behavior was amazingly similar to what some contractors were doing back East and was an uncomfortable reminder of the pilferage and resale of items that had been meant for the troops. In Minnesota, the greed and dishonesty of a few men would bring misery and death to dozens of settlers. Within thirty years, thousands of Native Americans would suffer the same fate.

The dishonest agent and several traders were among the first men killed in the uprising, but most of the others who were killed were innocent of all wrongdoing. Thousands of these settlers became refugees. In the end, the uprising was crushed, and 306 Native Americans were condemned to death. President Lincoln

became convinced that the uprising occurred because of years of broken promises, lies, and unfair treatment. He commuted the death sentences of all but thirty-eight of the condemned Indians, who were thereupon simultaneously hanged on a specially built gallows.

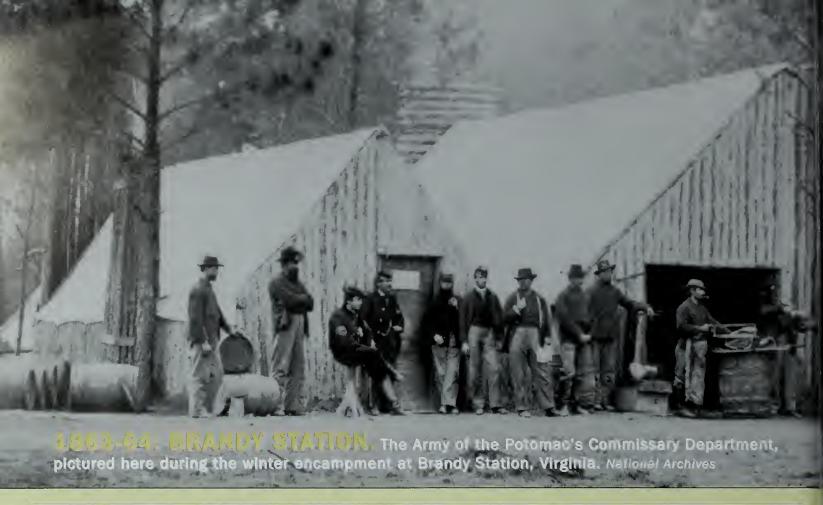
Tribes that had not taken part in the uprising, including several that had actually assisted the white refugees, were treated with suspicion. Some of their land was seized, and annuities owed by treaty weren't paid for several years. Word of all this spread among the tribes of the Plains, making settlers on the frontier very uneasy. This uprising, in fact, is considered to be the beginning of the Plains Indian Wars, which would not end until 1890.

Perhaps if this uprising had not occurred, some settlers would have still found a reason to demand that the government go to war against the Indians. Now, having to face tribes from Montana to Arizona that were either openly or potentially hostile, the Army would need more men and more forts on the frontier, in addition to those along the Mexican border and the coasts.

Of course, the men at these posts would all have to be fed, somehow. After all the troubles that had beset the men and the supply system during the Civil War, the government began looking at new ways to get the job done. The eventual solution, which was to establish sales commissaries for everyone in uniform, was about to change the entire way the Army took care of its men on the Great Plains.



CITY POINT, Virginia. The largest of all Civil War supply depots. From here, a rail line went directly to the Union camps around nearby Petersburg. *National Archives*



1861 - 1865

MARCH 2, 1861

WITH CIVIL WAR imminent, Congress stipulated that supplies for troops were once again to be contracted for. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 130)

1861

APRIL 12, 1861 -MAY 26, 1865 THE CIVIL WAR: On both sides, sutlers and bumboat operators provided valuable services because the basic official rations were sparse and unhealthful. However, there was plenty of overcharging and selling of inferior goods. Foraging was widespread, especially late in the war.

Officers had a cash allowance, according to rank, with which to buy supplies from the brigade commissary, who was an individual that kept "stores" (food items) for sale, at cost. The brigade commissary would also sell at cost to the enlisted men if they had a written order signed by an officer. Regimental and battery quartermasters obtained their basic ration supplies for the enlisted men and NCOs from the commissary.

Generous or wealthy officers bought for their men as well. Canned tomatoes proved to be especially popular. As mentioned previously (1856), the government contracted with Gail Borden for canned evaporated milk; Borden's product reached a mass market, and was greatly popularized as a result. (*Life*, Bicentennial Issue, p. 95; Barriger,

Legislative History, p. 103; Cassidy, Products for the Army, pp. 1-2, fn 13)

One contemporary writer noted that troops on the march could not be issued certain portions of their regular rations, and at the end of the month those rations were forfeited and reverted to the government. (John D. Billings, *Hard Tack and Coffee*, pp. 110-15)

The Confederates suffered, too. One Southern officer, complaining about the beef, pleaded with the commissary, "For God's sake [do] not start throwing in the hoofs and horns." Another Confederate said the cornbread ration "... would get so hard and moldy that when we broke it, it looked like it had cobwebs in it." (*Time-Life*, "Tenting Tonight: The Soldier's Life," p. 86)

APRIL 12, 1861

WHEN WAR started, the Subsistence Department had twelve men including the chief (Joseph E. Johnston). Three men, including Johnston, resigned to join the Confederacy. (Risch, *QM Support*, p. 383)

MAY 15, 1861

BRIG. GEN. Montgomery C. Meigs became quartermas-



Brig. Gen. Montgomery C. Meigs



ter general and held the position until February 1882.

JULY 5, 1861

WITH "AN ACT for the Better Organization of the Military Establishment," Congress provided for an expanded and flexible daily ration consisting of 1 pound flour, 1.6 ounces green unground coffee, .6 ounces salt, 2.4 ounces dried beans, .32 gills vinegar, .04 ounces black pepper, 2.4 ounces sugar, and 20 ounces beef. Each man was to receive a pound of potatoes per week, along with beans, rice, and hominy. (Barriger, Legislative History, p. 97; Cassidy, Products for the Army, p. 1; J. Dyer, Subsistence Supply, II-3)

JULY 22, 1861

SHORTLY AFTER the First Battle of Bull Run (Manassas, Virginia) on July 21, Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan would be given command of the Union armies. Though he would eventually be fired by President Abraham Lincoln for his failure to defeat the Confederates, no one doubted his ability to properly train, equip, and supply his army. On this date, Congress established a commissary of subsistence for each brigade, which would immeasurably help McClellan's efforts. (Catton, Mr. Lincoln's Army, 98, 326; Hucles, Haversack, 131)

AUG. 3, 1861

CONGRESS ADDED twelve commissary officers to the Subsistence Department, increased the amount of flour or bread in the daily ration, and stipulated that fresh meat should be substituted for salted meat when possible. (Risch, QM Support, p. 383; Hucles, Haversack, p. 131) Congress also termi-

nated the issuing of grog to ships' officers and warrant officers. (Grog was any drink containing rum.)

SEPT. 29, 1861

COL. GEORGE Gibson, commissary general of subsistence since April 18, 1818, died on this date. Lt. Col. Joseph P. Taylor became the new commissary general of subsistence. (Risch, QM Support, p. 382; Weigley, *U.S. Army*, p. 564)

SEPT. 29, 1861

COMMISSARY GENERAL Joseph P. Taylor told Secretary of War Simon Cameron that while the Subsistence Department obtained most of its rations by contract, wartime needs would have to be met by additional purchases on the open market.

He added that the experience of the Mexican and Seminole wars had shown most subsistence supplies were best purchased in large cities by officers who supervised the goods' packing. Thereafter, the department purchased its subsistence at the markets of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Cincinnati, Louisville, Chicago, and St. Louis. (Risch, QM Support, pp. 383-84)

SEPT. 29, 1861

Military Technology: Thaddeus Lowe used a balloon for aerial reconnaissance for the Union Army; R. J. Gatling invented the first machine gun.

DECEMBER, 1861

CONGRESS REPEALED legislation that had granted sutlers a lien upon soldiers' pay. However, this policy was not always enforced, and many sutlers continued to collect from the men's pay. (Department of the Army Fact Sheet, Origin and History of Sales Commissaries in the U.S. Army, Nov 1959. Also see Army Regulations, 1863, pp. 528-29)

1862

1862 - 1863

UNION ARMY used Aquia Creek Landing, Virginia, as its main field supply depot. From there, the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac railroad (aka the Aquia Creek and Fredericksburg) supplied troops in the Fredericksburg area. The army abandoned the landing and railway after the second Battle of Manassas in 1862, and again after the battle of Chancellorsville in 1863, but both times it returned a few months later. In 1864 the army moved south,

1862

CONGRESS OUTLINED the articles sutlers could sell: apples (fresh and dried), oranges, figs, lemons, butter, cheese, milk, syrup, molasses, raisins, candles, crackers, wallets, brooms, comforters, boots, pocket mirrors, pins, gloves, leather, tin washbasins, shirt buttons, newspapers, books,

and City Point became the new main field depot.



1862: MOBILE SUTLER. A sutler's cart selling tobacco to Union troops at Bailey's Crossroads, Virginia. As the drawing suggests, pipes and tobacco were among the most popular items available; other big sellers were alcohol and canned goods, particularly milk, vegetables, and fruits. The sutlers remained mobile when the troops were on the march, making carts like this one the predecessor of the modern tactical field exchange. *R. Waud, National Archives*

tobacco, cigars, pipes, matches, clothes brushes, toothbrushes, hairbrushes, coarse and fine combs, emery, pocket handkerchiefs, stationery, armor oil, sweet oil, razor straps, razors, shaving soap, soap, suspenders, scissors, shoestrings, needles, thread, knives, and pencils.

The list was enlarged in 1863, doubtlessly because of a heavy demand for additional foodstuffs. The new items were dried beef, smoked tongues, canned and fresh vegetables, pepper, mustard, yeast powder, pickles, sardines, bologna sausages, eggs, buckwheat flour, mackerel, codfish and poultry, saucepans, coffee pots, tin plates, tin cups, knives and forks, spoons, twine, wrapping paper, officers' uniform clothing, socks, shirts, shoes and drawers. (Justin Paniere, *Troop Support Digest*, Summer 1979, pp. 45-46)

U.S. *Military History:* An uprising in Minnesota was the spark that set off the **Plains Indian Wars**. The wars began because the Indians were not receiving the provisions and annuities promised them by treaty. They were being withheld by a corrupt Indian agent and several corrupt traders, who were among

the first men killed in the uprising. (Ralph K. Andrist, *The Long Death*, pp. 27-68)

1862 - 1865

AT SOME POINT marching rations, also known as "iron rations," were used. These included salt beef or salt pork, bacon, hard bread or hardtack, black coffee, and (sometimes) sugar. Although not specified in the regulations, this development marked the first time that specialized rations for specific situations were issued. Charles Francis Adams Jr., a Union veteran, who had attained rank of brigadier general in 1865, later wrote that his intestines were "corroded" with concentrated nourishment. He wanted more bread, vegetables and tea, but there was no chance of getting any of them. (Cassidy, *Products for the Army*, pp. 1-2, *fn* 14; Catton, *Glory Road*, p. 108; J. Dyer, *Subsistence Supply*, II-4)

March 9, 1862

Military Technology: The first steam-driven ironclads, **USS Monitor** and **CSS Virginia** (also called the **Merrimac** by the Union) battled at Hampton Roads, Virginia, a channel leading into the Chesapeake Bay. This revolutionized naval warfare.

1862

April 1862

CONGRESS forbade sutlers to sell whiskey and other hard liquor, but in reality this prohibition was seldom enforced. (Army Fact Sheet, Origin and History of Sales Commissaries, Nov 1959. Also see Army Regulations, 1863, pp. 528-29)

JULY 5, 1862

BUTTER, desiccated (dried and compressed) vegetables, and an extract of coffee, combined with milk and sugar, were added to the ration. The bread component was reduced. (Barriger, Legislative History, p. 98; Cassidy, Products for the

Army, p. 1; Catton, Glory Road, p. 142)

JULY 17, 1862

EACH ARMY corps was authorized a commissary of subsistence. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 131)

- **JANUARY 1863**

NOVEMBER 1862 THE UNION'S Army of the Potomac ran into subsistence problems at Falmouth, Virginia, across the Rappahannock River from Fredericksburg. "Never were we any worse off for supplies," wrote a soldier in the 9th Massachusetts Infantry. Fights actually broke out between regiments when men in units the commissaries had missed tried to steal supplies from those who had received their rations.

> The food that did get to the troops was often insufficient and ill-balanced, consisting mostly of



1862: NO MORE GROG. On August 31, the Navy stopped issuing grog to ships' companies. It was not a popular move. Sailors expected grog, made with rum, to be aboard ship. But alcohol was already a major social problem in the mid-nineteenth century, and the military had to take steps to curtail drunkenness and alcoholism. U.S. Naval Historical Center Web site

AS THE UNION ARMY pushed into the South, it deprived the area of its black labor force. Many African-Americans subsequently worked for the quartermaster and commissary departments. National Archives

the usual fried salt pork, hardtack, and coffee. Sick men got the same rations as healthy ones, even if their ailment was scurvy, a disease known to be cured by a steady diet of vegetables and fruits. Other common sicknesses were malnutrition, dysentery, constipation, and diarrhea, all caused by faulty diet.

The problem was not that the Army was unable to procure food, because there was plenty of food at the storehouses just a few miles away. Instead, it was the Army's inability to move the food from the storage points to the troops who needed it. (Catton, Glory Road, pp. 31, 108-09)

1863

FEBRUARY 1863

CONGRESS RAISED the rank of the commissary general of subsistence to brigadier general and added five officers, bringing the wartime total to twenty-nine personnel. (Risch, QM Support, p. 383; Hucles, Haversack, p. 131)

FEBRUARY -**MAY 1863**

MAJ. GEN. Joe Hooker, new commander of the Army of the Potomac, attacked corruption among some of the officers who had been designated as "commissaries of subsistence." The officers were illegally selling to civilians fresh cabbages, potatoes, onions, and vegetables meant for the Army.

These officers had falsified monthly records to cover their tracks. Hooker fought this corruption, creating a system of accountability. He required each regimental commander to provide company cooks. (The soldiers were not equipped with anything beyond a tiny frying pan and a tin cup.) The cooks were detailed out of the ranks for a two-month assignment in the mess kitchen. After some training they could cook fresh vegetables,



1864: LIFE ALONG SUTLER'S ROW.

Both of these photographs have been identified as being sutiers' establishments in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The photo above, however, may actually show the sutlers near Etowah, Tennessee. No matter the location, they tell essentially the same story. The signs on the wooden, temporary buildings above and the more substantial structures at right all show the variety of goods available to the Union Army. Interestingly, the photo on the right shows that the local commissary officer shared rental space for offices and storage with sutlers (fourth door from the right).

National Archives



soups, and stews. (Catton, Glory Road, pp. 142-43; Official Records, Vol XXV, Part 2, p. 57)

JUNE - JULY 1863 THE TURNING points of the war, the battles at Vicksburg, Mississippi, and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, were both influenced by the Confederates' lack of proper provisions.

> The city of Vicksburg was cut off from supply and eventually had to surrender. Lee's army in Pennsylvania, operating in enemy territory, could not long sustain itself, and Lee felt pressured to win a major victory before his army was ready.

1864 Food Technology: The first salmon cannery in the United States went into operation in Washington, California. (Elkort, Food, pp. 25-26)

FEB. 17, 1864

Military Technology: The Confederate submarine Hunley sank the USS Housatonic in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. This was the first time a submarine sank a ship. Later, the Hunley itself sank with a loss of all hands. The submarine was raised from the bottom of the harbor in 2000.

JUNE 25, 1864

CONGRESS REQUIRED examination of commissary officers to assess their qualifications. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 132)

JUNE 29, 1864

JOSEPH P. Taylor, commissary general of subsistence since September 29, 1861, died on this date. He had been in the department for thirty-two years. He was succeeded by Amos B. Eaton, a West Point graduate who had been an officer in the department for twenty-six years. Eaton remained until he retired in June 1874 with thirty-six years in the Subsistence Department. (Risch, QM Support, pp. 382-83)

JUNE 30, 1864

THE MEAT component of the daily ration was changed to 12 ounces pork or bacon, or 20 ounces of fresh or salt beef. (Barriger, Legislative History, p. 103; Cassidy, Products for the Army, p. 1; J. Dyer, Subsistence Supply, II-3)

JULY 4, 1864

CONGRESS PASSED an act devised to reimburse those who had allegedly supplied subsistence to the Union Army. Sometimes called "The Food and Forage Act." (Annual Report, Commissary General of Subsistence, 19 Oct 1867, p. 578; Rita Alexander, AFCOMS - Office of the Comptroller, conversation with the author, 10 Oct 1990)

SUMMER 1864 -SPRING 1865 **THE SIEGE of Petersburg,** Virginia, prompted establishment of City Point as the Union Army's supply depot. From there, a rail line took fresh food supplies to the encampments.

SEPT. 1, 1864 -DEC. 22, 1864 U.S. Military History: Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman's March to the Sea, from Atlanta to Savannah, Georgia, cut a swath of destruction 60 miles wide and 300 miles long. His primary targets were railways and farms producing foodstuffs.

1865

MARCH 3, 1865

CONGRESS reorganized the Subsistence Department, empowering the secretary of war to appoint chief commissary and assistants for various military divisions. It also allowed officers to purchase rations from commissary storehouses on credit. This act also authorized the issue of tobacco at cost to enlisted men, not to exceed sixteen ounces per month, and could be issued

on credit. The act also allowed refugees and freed slaves to receive provisions and clothing. (Army Appropriation Act, 3 Mar 1865, Section 6; Secretary of War, Annual Report, 14 Nov 1866, 375; Annual Report, 19 Oct 1867, p. 577; General Order No. 64, 1866)

APRIL 9, 1865

U.S.Military History: Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia. The Civil War remains America's bloodiest conflict. Some 184,594 Americans were killed in combat on both sides, another 373,458 died of other causes (mostly diseases), and 412,175 were wounded.

APRIL 14, 1865

U.S. History: John Wilkes Booth shot President Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C. Lincoln died the following morning. Vice President Andrew Johnson was subsequently sworn in as the nation's seventeenth president.





4

ESTABLISHING 1866 - 1897 COMMISSARY SALES STORES

ESPITE THE PATRIOTIC FERVOR it engendered in both North and South, the Civil War had been a terrible experience for the nation. The conflict caused a multitude of problems and lingering animosities that were not easily overcome. Some of these wounds were healed only with the passage of time, and many still linger today.

But there was one happy exception: The gastronomical hardships suffered by both armies had not all been suffered in vain. Complaints had not fallen on deaf ears. The sutlers, many of whom had been purveyors of overpriced food and the cause of individual economic distress, roundly despised by military and civilians alike, would gradually be replaced by sales commissaries.



COMMISSARIES OUT WEST. The isolation of Western outposts made these the last places to actually get fully stocked commissaries. For that reason, post traders were allowed to remain in business at these frontier forts until 1893. In this photo, building No. 30 at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, serves as the commissary office and storehouse. Public affairs office, Fort Huachuca, Arizona

With so many men in military service during the war, the general population had become well acquainted with the soldiers' dietary privations and hardships from personal experience, letters, or testimony from men who returned home on leave, or when their tour of duty was over. As a result, there was a great deal of sympathy for, and understanding of, the lot of the common soldier and sailor, and this translated into a huge voting block that favored better treatment of the men in uniform.

When the war ended, the returning veterans made their feelings known to their elected representatives on various subjects, including the hated rations, contractors, and sutlers. Veterans organizations, especially the Grand Army of the Republic, had tremendous political clout, and helped ensure widespread support for measures that improved the lives of those who had served, or were still serving, their country and their state. One early sign of this concern was the establishment of state-supported soldiers' and sailors' homes to care for aging, disabled, or impoverished veterans.

Many veterans, North and South, were soon elected to public office themselves, becoming state legislators, governors, congressmen, senators, and presidents. In fact, of all the presidents from Grant to McKinley, only one had not served in the Union Army during the war. Thus the veterans, or the families of deceased veterans,

had plenty of sympathetic listeners, and an unprecedented amount of political influence in high places. It's not surprising that action was soon taken to get the sutlers, if not the contractors, off the posts and out of the business of selling food to the Army. The general opinion was it would be best for the Army to "care for its own."

This opinion was strengthened by events at the frontier posts, where shortages in the rations were common. In one instance, a two-day marching ration consisted solely of seven four-inch squares of hardtack. One soldier later wrote, "A hungry man could have eaten the entire two days' rations at one meal and asked for more." At Fort McDowell, in the Arizona Territory, a typical isolated garrison, fifteen men died from improper diet and severe dysentery.

The public had heard this before. Now the Army was a shell of its wartime self—less than twenty-five thousand men, a force half the size of Belgium's, one-seventh that of Britain's, and one-twentieth that of France's—but it struggled to feed the few men it had.

Something had to be done, and soon it was: the first attempt to abolish sutlers and establish sales commissaries.

SUTLERS GET REPRIEVE

It actually took a false start, several tries, and three decades before the sutlers and their postwar equivalents, the post traders, were completely gone, but the wheels began coming off the sutlers' carts in July 1866, when Congress first tried to abolish them. In their place, the Subsistence Department was to furnish "sutlery" articles (food and personal items not included in the ration) that would be specified by the Inspectors General of the Army. The act allowed officers and, for the first time, enlisted men, to purchase such goods at cost. If necessary, they could obtain the goods on credit. There was no mention of these actions being allowed only at remote posts, as has often been alleged. The act was to take effect July 1, 1867.

This legislation established the first subsistence commissary sales to men of all ranks and placed no restrictions on the geographical location of such sales. The lawmakers in Washington wanted civilians out of the business of selling to the troops.

Then, sutlers got a reprieve. Congress had failed to make a monetary appropriation to make the act's provisions possible, so it retraced its steps. First, there was a delay in publishing the proposed regulations. No provision had been made to address the considerable needs of civilian "emigrants, travelers and settlers" at frontier posts. In April 1867, Congress authorized the existence of a trading establishment at any military post on the frontier between the central Great Plains and California, whenever the commanding general of the Army judged that it was needed

to accommodate such civilians. No mention was made of accommodating the troops, since they would be served by the subsistence sales.

SALES COMMISSARIES ESTABLISHED

Then, two months before subsistence sales were to begin, sutlers were again permitted to sell to the troops. They could sell only those items not available at the local commissary, and they could conduct business only at frontier posts that were not in the vicinity of any town or city. The distinction is interesting. Sutlers were limited to posts located away from cities and towns-literally, the stereotypical remote posts; commissary sales could take place at posts near towns. This is an important distinction, since modern opponents of the commissary benefit appear to think that exactly the opposite is true. Remote posts were actually the last places to get commissaries.

"Sutling" had been a lucrative business because there was no competition. Now, on the frontier, the soldiers could not even sneak away to try the prices at a nearby unit sutler's store as they had during the war, simply because there *were* no nearby units. However, as before, sutlers still performed a valuable (if often overpriced) service. They sold hundreds of articles that soldiers at posts on the Great Plains,

far from the nearest town, could not get otherwise if there was no sales commissary, or if the commissary was unable to procure those items.

Finally, on July 1, 1867, the Army began to "care for its own," with the officers and the enlisted men now eligible to purchase goods at cost directly from the Subsistence Department. (The Navy, with an entirely different set of circumstances, wouldn't follow suit for another forty-three years.) Although the Army stores barely resembled the stores of today, these were the first commissary sales stores. They were called exactly that to distinguish them from issue facilities. Only later would the title be shortened by general usage to commissary.

Prior to these events, commissaries had been simply storehouses, with offices for receiving and distributing shipments that were purchased from contractors. Although they continued to look like storehouses, commissaries also sold subsistence goods to soldiers of all ranks, over the same counter where they'd issued official rations.

A century later, the commissary at Fort Delaware, Delaware, would be called the "first store," but actually it was the first commissary sales store for which records are known to exist. The fact is, all commissary storehouses became sales stores on July 1, 1867. The true significance of the

Fort Delaware store is that the records show it was sent sales items in October 1867; this confirms that within the first four months of sales commissary operations, a store was operating at a post with close proximity to major towns—Delaware City, Wilmington, and Philadelphia. In other words, the Fort Delaware store was not remote by any stretch of the imagination.

In 1867, location wasn't the issue. The main concerns were providing customer convenience, maintaining good prices, and easing the sutlers out of business.

Although posts such as Fort Delaware (which had easy access to supplies coming down the river from Philadelphia) could establish and run such a sales store, frontier posts had problems acquiring sales goods. Transportation on the Great Plains had not yet reached a point where supplies could get through with any sort of regularity, especially during the winter. Even when goods did get through, they were mostly non-perishables. Until transport improved and refrigerated rail cars became common, fresh fruits and vegetables were luxuries unknown at frontier commissary stores.

Posts in the East, with no such transportation trouble, were the first to operate well-stocked sales commissaries; those on the frontier, despite long-held beliefs to the contrary, were actually the *last* to do so. Sutlers were allowed to continue doing

FORT DELAWARE.

This post in Delaware was known to have had a commissary sales store by 1868; it is the first store for which any records are known to exist. Although Fort Delaware was in the middle of the Delaware River, it was not "remote." It was only forty miles downstream from Philadelphia, and daily trips for mail and miscellaneous supplies were made to Delaware City, just a mile away.

Painting: "Fort Delaware, 1812" by Seth Eastman.

Painting: "Fort Delaware, 1812" by Seth Eastman.
U.S. Army Center for Military History



business with soldiers at remote posts because the frontier commissaries were not fully operational.

Therefore, the commissaries and the sutlers complemented each other. What the commissaries sold, the sutlers could not. It was an arrangement that worked as long as neither intruded upon the other's stock list and the sutler kept his prices reasonable.

TECHNOLOGY

In the 1860s, two important advances encouraged settlement on the Great Plains, necessitating the presence of the Army in posts from Texas to the Dakotas and Montana to Arizona. The Army was there to keep the peace with the Native tribes, enforce treaties, and protect settlers. In some cases, the military was the only law in an unsettled territory.

The first was the invention and manufacture of a revolutionary steel-faced plow, the earliest product able to till the rockhard soil of the Great Plains. Heretofore, the Plains had been regarded as a great American desert because of the harsh environment. There were millions of bison, plagues of locusts, severe thunderstorms, and tornados. All discouraged settlement. The terrible winters and hot summers froze and baked the ground, making it hard and unbreakable with traditional plows. But the new plow and others like it were a boon to agriculture; the inventions sent an influx of immigrants onto the Plains, which would become America's breadbasket.

Also key to this migration was the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869. It assisted the settlement of the Great Plains and also moved foodstuffs quickly from coast to coast. California oranges competed with those from Florida; wheat from the Great Plains, as well as beef from Texas and Colorado, became available on each coast. As a result, food prices dropped, and the Plains farmers often found themselves in debt to the same railroads that had shipped their goods to Chicago or other markets at rates that kept increasing in a time of deflation.

It wasn't all bad news. The spread of the railroads throughout the West facilitated the movement of soldiers and supplies across vast distances, and for the first time, commissary sales stores at least had a fighting chance of being well-stocked. Then, within ten years of the first refrigerated railroad car being built, perishable foods (particularly beef and produce) could be transported to markets that were previously unreachable, including military posts.

That development changed the face of the cattle industry and enabled soldiers at outlying posts to get quality food.

FIRST SURCHARGE

In 1879, the Army Appropriation Act established an additional 10-percent charge to all commissary items except tobacco to

The First Official STOCK LIST

HEN THE FIRST commissary sales stores began doing business on July 1, 1867, there were no guidelines as to what they could stock and sell. For awhile, the stores' stock was dictated by the posts' proximity to railways and by the tastes of their officers. It was not until October 1868, that the first official list appeared.

Evolution of the list began in the 1820s, when officers, who were permitted to buy goods for their personal use from the Subsistence Department, specified their preferences to procurement personnel. The assortment grew after 1841, when officers were allowed to buy items for their families, who had tastes and preferences of their own. During the Civil War, the Army, realizing the volunteers swelling its ranks were "unaccustomed to live on the bare ration," * authorized sutlers to sell a huge selection of goods to the men, and allowed officers to buy Subsistence Department goods for their company mess. The department stored additional, higher-quality provisions for the sick and wounded but often sold the goods to officers with no connection to the hospitals.

After the war, the War Department allowed the sale of "articles usually required for the subsistence of an officer." Although the items had to be part of the official ration,

they could be of "varieties and higher grades" not normally given to the enlisted men. For example, bacon and white sugar were often substituted for ham and brown sugar. By the time commissary sales stores came into existence, Army officers had become accustomed to purchasing a large variety of goods from subsistence storehouses and sutlers.

In October 1867, the Commissary General of Subsistence issued a generalized list of articles to be stocked in sales commissaries. Reflecting the liberal interpretation of the war years as well as what the men had been able to buy from the sutlers, the new list was very comprehensive and allowed a broad selection of the authorized sale items. For example, it specifically named mackerel, cod, and herring, but other, unspecified "ordinary varieties" of pickled or dried fish were also acceptable. Dried fruit, canned peaches, and canned tomatoes were specifically mentioned, as were "other ordinary varieties" of canned fruit, vegetables, jellies, jams, and preserves.

Thus, many items never named in the 1867 list found their way into the sales stores. Sometimes, men doing the ordering got overly enthusiastic. Maj. Samuel Cushing of the Subsistence Department** noted, "The higher grades of the ration were supplied in every variety ... when the requisitions were received,

^{*} and **— See Maj. Samuel T. Cushing, "Subsistence Department: Splendid Record of the Personnel of the Corps," in Army and Navy Register, September, 7, 1895.

help pay spoilage and transport costs. In view of modern efforts to tax and otherwise discourage the use of tobacco, it's interesting that tobacco was the only sales item exempted. In 1879, tobacco was beginning to be regarded as a necessity, much as the old liquor ration had been perceived.

This was in effect the first surcharge, but

it didn't last long. It was enormously unpopular. In 1884, Congress repealed it, again stipulating that sales to officers and enlisted men by the Subsistence Department would be at cost price only. Cost price was defined as "the invoice price of the last cost of that article;" that is, the cost "of the last lot of the article received ... prior to

the first day of the month in which the sale is made." This stipulation remained essentially unchanged for decades.

COMMISSARY PATRONS

The latitude allowed local commanders in recommending whether or not their post should have a sales facility and how it

nearly every variety of goods, such as sardines, canned salmon, clams, oysters ... and numberless jams, jellies, preserves, fruits... were called for and supplied, and nearly every article mentioned in the largest grocer's catalogue was furnished to one or another post in the Army." As a result, there were "irregular and extravagant calls for nearly everything that could be eaten."

This situation resulted from a tradition born in class distinction. Officers usually came from families whose income, education, social standing, and political connections were perceived to be a cut above those of the enlisted men, and the privileges of rank included better food. It would take several more generations of gradual social progressivism, as well as two world wars, to change this perception. Ironically, subsistence personnel sometimes ordered far more than the officers at one post could possibly consume, so the excess goods, intended all along for the officers, had to be sold to the enlisted men.

The overabundance did not continue. On October 12, 1868, the commissary general published a scaled-down, more specific list of eighty-two items to be sold in the commissaries. Today, it is regarded as the first national commissary stock list. If it seems lean, one needs to remember that the typical dry-goods grocery store of the time stocked about the same number of items. If it seems ambiguous, one needs to remember that purchasing was localized. Since there were few national brands, the list specified no brand names or package sizes. Canned corn could mean any regional or local brand the commissary officer could locate, in whatever size was available.

The list expanded as time passed. In 1881 it added brushes and other non-edibles, including tobacco. Still, it remained small (by modern standards) until after World War II,

when product proliferation, supermarket growth, and the increase in the number of overseas military families prompted larger stock lists. Today, commissaries stock from 2,000 to 14,000 separate line items.

A MODERN reconstruction of the old commissary warehouse at Fort Abraham Lincoln, North Dakota. DeCA photo: Pete Skirbunt



THE ORIGINAL LIST, authorized by Circular No. 5, Office of the Commissary General of Subsistence, was published on October 12, 1868. It is shown here in its original spelling:

Breakfast Bacon Sugar Cured Hams Prunes Beef Tongues Smoked Beef Family Flour Crackers, assorted Java Coffee Costa Rica Coffee Cut Loaf Sugar Crushed Sugar Granulated Sugar Syrup Molasses Lime Juice Sperm Whale Candles Toilet Soaps Table Salt Cayenne Pepper Mackerel, in pickle White Fish, in pickle Codfish, dried Salmon, smoked Halibut, smoked Herring, smoked Sardines Salmon, canned Dried Apples

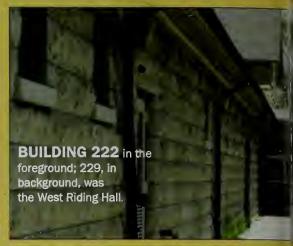
Dried Peaches Canned Quince Preserve **Dried Currants** Pickled Cucumbers Pickled Onions Curried Cabbage Sauer Kraut Mixed Pickles Fine Pickles Canned Oysters Canned Clams Canned Lobsters Canned Tomatoes Canned Green Corn Canned Green Peas Canned Lima Beans Canned String beans Canned Potatoes Canned Onions Canned Peaches Canned Pears Canned Pine Apples Canned Cranberries Canned Red Currant Jelly Canned Pine Apple Jelly Lard Canned Raspberry Jam Canned Blackberry Jam Cheese

Canned Pine Apple Preserve Canned Peach Preserve Canned Pear Preserve Canned Milk Mustard Allspice Cinnamon Cloves Ginger Lemon, Flavoring Extract Vanilla, Flavoring Extract Worcestershire Sauce Corn Starch Farina Tapioca Maizena Chocolate Vermicelli Macaroni Yeast Powders Saleratus* Bi-Carbonate Soda Cream of Tartar Butter

*--- Saleratus was either potassium or sodium bicarbonate-that is, baking soda. However, in the 1860s, the word could also refer to a shortening used in cooking. Its meaning here may well be the latter, since bi-carbonate soda is listed as a separate item.

Canned Strawberry Jam





The SEVEN STORES of Fort Riley

ROBABLY NO OTHER American military post has as many former grocery sales buildings still standing as Fort Riley, Kansas. The store that opened there in 1997 was the post's seventh; of its six predecessors, five still exist. These five stores, the 1997 store, and a commissary storage facility were all made to last, built of limestone quarried on Fort Riley. The old stores, all on the "Old Post," are protected from demolition by their historical status.

Fort Riley's oldest commissary on record was built around 1873. Drawings show it was much like the commissary at Fort Abraham Lincoln (see page 77). It is likely that it was made of wood, which is probably the reason it is the only one of the seven stores that no longer exists. In 1882, a cyclone took off its roof, but the store was repaired and stayed in business until 1892. No doubt the storm encouraged the more frequent use of the locally quarried limestone. Among the new buildings using the stone was the post trader's store and warehouse, built in 1888 by Moses Waters (see page 75). Today this is Waters Hall, Building 170.

In 1892, Fort Riley replaced the wooden commissary with a stone structure that did triple duty as a sales commissary, subsistence storehouse, and quartermaster office. Today it's Building 301. The store moved to another subsistence storehouse, today's Building 303, in 1905, and remained there for fifty-three years. Damaged by fire in 1937, it was quickly repaired by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which performed military construction projects nationwide during President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.

In 1958, Building 222 became the new commissary. It had been built in 1907-08 as a combined stable, barracks, and tack room (a harness shop). Original records list its original capacity as "110 animals and 30 men." The new commissary included a nursery, since children weren't allowed in the sales area. In those days there were no day care facilities on post. Next door, Building 224, another combined stable-barracks-tack room, was used for commissary storage.

In 1971, the commissary moved into the old West Riding Hall (now Polk Hall, Building 229), built in 1907-08. Until 1952, the hall served as an arena for horse shows and polo games. It also functioned as a riding and training hall for mounted troops, the cavalry

school, and even the U.S. Olympic Equestrian Team. Next to the building, the Army interred three well-loved horses who died between 1945-50 and memorialized them with a gravestone: *Olympic, Si Murray*, and *Vast*, "the only horse in history who could gallop backwards and change leads while doing so."

The riding hall was so big (332 feet long, 109 feet wide, with a 65-foot-high roof) it required some specialized engineering. Its walls were built on rollers, allowing the entire building to expand or contract with the weather, keeping the stone from cracking. Sometime after 1971, its original skylights were covered, and the copper roof (oxidized and green) was removed, garnering \$40,000 in salvage. The store kept some offices in Building 222 and was connected to the storage in Building 224 by a five-hundred-foot tunnel and conveyor belt running under the street.

Today, "Mose" Waters' store is a guest house; Building 301 is a civilian personnel office; 303 is an Army and Air Force Exchange Service warehouse; 222 houses the local Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) human resources operations division; and 224, the old storehouse, is a military police training center.

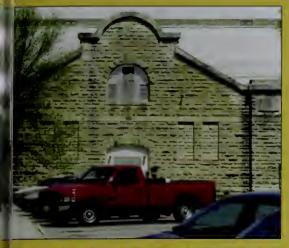
The West Riding Hall houses both the post property records office and the troop issue facility, which uses the old store's refrigeration equipment. In 1994, while it was still the commissary, it was named in honor of Gen. James Hilliard Polk, a 1933 West Point graduate and veteran of World War II and Korea. He was

one of the last senior Army commanders to have served with the horse cavalry.

A VIEW of the underground conveyor belt, looking down the tunnel to the West Riding Hall from the warehouse in Building 224.

DeCA photos: Pete Skirbunt











would be operated made for an interesting mixture of people who were allowed to shop at various posts. The needs of these posts were always fluctuating. Different individuals could be said to be "at need" on any given day. The result was widespread flexibility and discussion over who should be able to purchase goods from the government. The lists of eligible patrons were, therefore, always in flux.

For example, in 1869, civilian surgeons under contract to the Army were permitted to buy small quantities of subsistence items, in cash, for themselves and their families. In 1879, civilian employees stationed at remote posts that had no post trader could buy from the sales commissary at cost prices; the 10-percent surcharge was added, and payment had to be by cash. This seems to have been the precursor of the modern practice of civilian government employees overseas having access to the commissaries.

The same year, Congress established a subsistence allowance for women accompanying the troops. This subsidy was meant primarily for spouses; a previous act had excluded "laundresses" from accompanying soldiers unless they were spouses. This provision was renewed at least four times in the next decade, showing that wives, and presumably children, were becoming an important consideration. Officers were allowed to designate a family member to make subsistence purchases during their absence, and all activeduty officers and enlisted men could make subsistence purchases on credit.

Again starting in 1879, retired officers could purchase from the Subsistence Department any articles classified as subsistence stores for their own use or that of their families. They could buy at cost price, but they apparently had to pay cash. No mention was yet made of retired enlisted men, and it's still unclear exactly when this group started enjoying the commissary benefit.

POST TRADERS AND EXCHANGES

As already mentioned, sales commissaries were intended to handle the bulk of the resale business on post, but sutlers remained in business where needed. In a change that was of little substance other than as a public relations move, in 1867 a congressional joint resolution replaced sutlers with post traders. It wasn't until 1870 that Congress actually established post traders.

However, the new title really didn't matter. Most troops still referred to these traders with the traditional term "sutler." The men were perceptive, because there really wasn't any difference. The traders filled the same role as the sutlers and were often the same people, with a new title, selling foods and hard goods. They were under stricter supervision than before, and the traders had to be appointed by the War Department. Again, they were forbidden to sell articles also being sold by the subsistence commissary sales store at the same post.

Congress abolished post traders in January 1893. The success of commissaries and soldier-sponsored post canteens had significantly diminished the need for post traders.

In 1895, post exchange stores were established to sell hard goods and clothing to the troops in the same fashion that the commissaries were selling food.

Sutlers remained authorized at only two garrisoned posts because of "exceptional circumstances," but they were soon gone altogether.

Then, as now, there were major differences between commissaries and exchanges. Commissaries sold "at cost price" but the exchanges sold at a profit, with the profits going to upkeep and to soldiers' activities. (Today these activities are called morale, welfare, and recreation, or "MWR.") Commissaries dealt primarily in foodstuffs, while exchanges sold hard goods. Commissaries received money from the Army's budget, while exchanges were self-supporting, reflecting the difference that exists today between appropriated and nonappropriated funds.

POST GARDENS

Soldiers on the frontier had to endure the misery brought on by inadequate subsistence and dietary deficiencies until com-



1880s: GREAT PLAINS SOLDIERS. In the field, even the officers sometimes had to prepare their own food. Items they purchased from the commissary or post trader often made their meals more palatable. *National Archives*

missary sales stores slowly established themselves. In 1867 at Fort Phil Kearny, Wyoming Territory, a lack of fruits and vegetables resulted in every man at the post's initial establishment getting scurvy. Some men lost their teeth; others, the use of their legs. Only the arrival of spring, and with it the growth of wild onions, saved the post. The entire "scurvy gang" was ordered out of the post to eat the raw onions.

To the public, stories of substandard food meant that despite the technological advances of the past century, the country's soldiers were still being supplied (or, more to the point, *not* supplied) in exactly the same manner as armies of old. The American people felt it was disgraceful and primitive.

For years, people at frontier posts had planted vegetable gardens, either individually or as a post activity. In the hostile environment of the Great Plains, many gardens succumbed to poor soil or lack of water, or were consumed by marauding insects. Elizabeth "Libbie" Custer, wife of Lt. Col. George A. Custer, was probably the most famous of all post gardeners, but she

watched, helpless, as "an army of grasshoppers" devoured every vegetable garden at Fort Abraham Lincoln, Dakota Territory, in 1874. Years later, her published accounts of life on the Great Plains vividly described the insects "eating every twig," forcing a "return for another year to the tiresome diet of canned vegetables."

The grasshopper invasion of Fort Abraham Lincoln was not an isolated problem. In 1875, Congress authorized rations for everyone (military and civilian) on the Great Plains whose crops had been damaged or destroyed by a four-year plague of locusts that approached Biblical proportions. In 1881, new regulations acknowledged the problems confronting Great Plains posts in obtaining and growing fresh vegetables, and reaffirmed that seeds, garden implements, and-when all else failed —limited quantities of fresh vegetables could be sold at cost price by the subsistence department. But transporting fresh vegetables to some posts was difficult, and although some canned vegetables were usually available at the sales commissaries, the morale at many posts was adversely

impacted by the food's monotony.

Books published years later by Custer's widow eloquently described the monotony and privations endured by military families, making a solid (albeit unintentional) case supporting the need for sales commissaries. For example, she wrote of the scarcity of fresh eggs, which she considered "the greatest of luxuries" on the plains, and described how she once had several cases of eggs delivered from St. Paul, Minnesota. The railroads had not yet reached Fort Abraham Lincoln so the eggs came by wagon, and "five hundred miles of jostling made great havoc with them."

Breakage was not a problem with "crystallized" eggs, which were dried and canned; but, since their yolks and whites were mixed together, cooks and bakers had to forego any recipe calling for "whites or yolks only." Such eggs were just one of many ways in which life at a Great Plains post was not quite normal for people like Libbie Custer. The only milk available was condensed milk; the only meats were beef and, sometimes, Buffalo; and "luxuries" such as fresh fruit were extremely rare—

which explains why scurvy, a disease usually associated with lengthy sea voyages, was such a problem on the Great Plains. The Custers were even able on one occasion to obtain strawberries, and the treat made quite an impression on Libbie-especially when her husband gave a bowl of them to a guest: "This doubtless seems like a very trifling circumstance ... but there are those who have ventured 'eight miles for a lemon' and have gained some faint idea what temporary deprivations are. When such a life goes on year after year, and one forgets even the taste of fruit and fresh vegetables, it becomes an event when they do appear."

OFFICIAL DAILY RATION: A FAMILIAR STORY

After the Civil War, the rations were not much improved, which provided all the more reason for the establishment, continuation, and expansion of commissary sales. In fact, the 1874 ration wasn't much better than it had been during the Civil War. It included twenty ounces of fresh or salted beef, with substitutes permitted of sausages, mutton, and dried, pickled, or canned fish. President Ulysess S. Grant was empowered to make alterations to the ration, but apparently he did not. Not surprisingly, in 1875 a study at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, concluded the American ration was below the level of the English ration in "energy value," and was particularly lacking in vegetables and milk, conditions that would inevitably lead to the soldiers' physical deterioration.

During the 7th Cavalry's ill-fated 1876 summer campaign, the marching ration was nothing more exotic than twelve hardtack crackers (about one pound) and a piece of "sowbelly" (dried salt pork) per man per day. Trooper Jacob Horner later remarked on the slender rations: "It is surprising how little one can live on ... I'd eat it all [the entire day's ration] for breakfast and still be hungry." Trumpeter Ami Frank Mulford commented on the monotony of the field rations: "Hardtack, bacon and coffee for breakfast; raw bacon and 'tack for dinner; fried bacon and hard bread for supper." Joseph Sinsel of the 7th Infantry com-

mented many years later (1922), "Once in a great while we would get a cup of bean soup, and it tasted as good to us as an ice cream cone to a child."

The men improvised their own recipes, such as "pulverized hardtack, bacon, and raisins, boiled in condensed milk." The raisins and milk were not a part of the ration, not on the commissary stock list, and probably had to be purchased from the sutlers or post traders. While this is a good example of why the post traders were still in business, it's an equally good example as to why the commissary stock list needed to be expanded.

COMMISSARY CONSTRUCTION

In 1871, Army regulations specified plans for building new commissary storehouses and sales areas. In 1873, plans for such a structure were readied for a new post at Fort Abraham Lincoln, Dakota Territory. The Fort Lincoln storehouse was a building 200 feet long by 25 feet wide. It con-

tained three small rooms for offices, a large main room (about 165 feet long), thirty-two windows, four entrances, and a cellar, 43 feet by 22 feet, under one end of the main room. There was a specific area or counter specified for sales or issues. No one alive today would recognize it as a place where food sales were carried out, but it was state of the art for its time.

Two decades later, barracks were redesigned, as well. As of 1894, all new barracks were to provide a space for company cooking and messing. This placed the messing facilities under the same roof where the men lived. It accommodated a trend that had started decades before.

As far as the cooking itself went, in 1878 Army regulations called for company commanders to detail men for ten-day tours as cooks and bakers when there were no competent cooks available. It seemed to be a good idea, but an investigating board was less than enthusiastic when it found that "the food is, as a general rule, miserably



POST TRADER. This structure was built in 1888 at Fort Riley, Kansas, by post trader Moses "Mose" Waters. Regulations at the time allowed the trader to build his own sales and storage facility if an empty building was not available. Judging by the size and the substantial nature of the building—it was built of stone quarried on post— Waters must have been doing very well financially, but he died in 1892. Shortly thereafter, his widow sold the building to the government. In any event, she would have been out of business by 1893, when post traders were abolished. The building was so well constructed that it was later used as a canteen, an officers' club, and as a guest house. As of 2007, it was still being used for visitor lodging, and is known as "Waters Hall." It may be the only building on any military post named for a post trader. DeCA historical file, courtesy of Fort Riley Regimental Museum



IN 1874, SOLDIERS AT FORT LINCOLN complained to [Lt. Col. George] Custer about the post trader's high prices. Apparently the commissary was of no help, either because it was newly constructed and was not yet open, or because it couldn't keep enough items in stock. In any case, Custer circumvented the post trader by having his company officers go to Bismarck, just a few miles away, to make purchases for the enlisted men on the local economy. The post trader, of course, complained to [Secretary of War William W.] Belknap, who ordered Custer to stop interfering with the post trader's business.

cooked, while the man is in the kitchen long enough to ruin his clothing, without extra pay to replace it." The board tried to help by producing a cooking manual, and it endorsed a movement to have cooks and bakers specifically recruited and trained. Unfortunately, this much-needed reform did not occur until 1905.

NEW AND IMPROVED RATIONS

In the late 1870s, the daily rations themselves began undergoing changes. A travel ration of nonperishable subsistence was developed in 1878. Canned beans were added to the "issue supplies" in 1885 and quickly became a favorite campaign food. In 1887, the addition of canned tomatoes to the field rations helped to combat scurvy and other diseases brought on by a lack of proper nutrition. Because the diet of the Great Plains soldier was woefully short on ascorbic acid, the soldiers welcomed the addition. They ate the tomatoes warm, cold, or hot, and drank all the juice.

In 1890, in what was truly a revolutionary advance, one pound of fresh vegetables was added to the ration. Unfortunately, it was added mostly on paper, but at least the Army was beginning to recognize vegetables' importance. Not all the changes were well received, though. Pvt. Louis Ebert of the 6th Cavalry later recalled that the canned corned beef that was added to the ration in the early 1890s "was not fit to eat."

Other things never seemed to change. Hardtack, for instance, was still very much a part of the soldiers' daily experience. In 1890, one soldier in the 8th Cavalry commented, "Some of the hardtack [issued in

1890] ... was packaged in 1863 ... the hard-tack had a green mold on it, but we just wiped it off and they were all right."

EXPERIMENTAL RATIONS

In 1895, the commissary general of subsistence called for a series of tests to be conducted in an attempt to choose an official emergency ration. These tests were conducted in each of the eight military departments: the departments of the East, the Missouri, the Columbia, the Platte, Dakota, Texas, Colorado, and California.

As a part of the Department of Colorado's test, a company of the 7th Cavalry at Fort Logan was furnished with condensed rations of soup, coffee, bread, and bacon. The soup and coffee came in both tablet and powdered form and were to be dissolved in boiling water. The bread was small and hard, ballooning when dampened; the bacon was in a brick that needed to be heated.

This practice march, scheduled to last ten days, ended in failure after only four when the men complained of stomach irritation and hunger. This may have been real, or it may have been psychological. It's unclear whether there ever was anything wrong with the food, or whether the powdered, concentrated nature of the product was what caused the reaction. In any event, the instant coffee and soup would eventually become commonly accepted. Within twenty years they appeared in the civilian market and soon became familiar food products to the entire country.

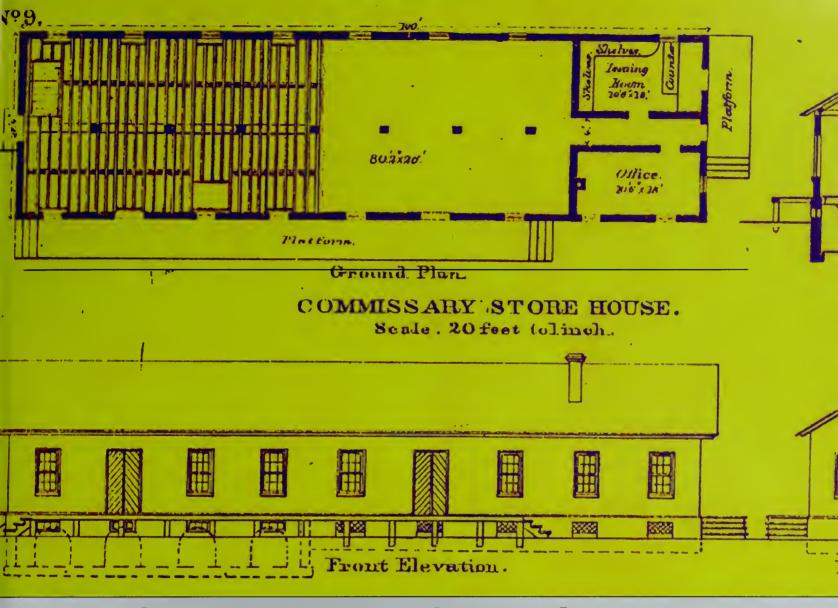
Two years later, Troop E of the 1st Cavalry at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, conducted a twelve-day practice march using the newly adopted emergency ration. Forty-four men and two officers took part in the experiment, covering an average of twenty-one miles per day across open country. A detachment of nine men and one officer conducted a simultaneous march on full rations as a control group. The tests went a long way toward determining the usefulness of the ration, though the report cautioned that the conditions of the march did not include the strain associated with the proximity of an enemy or combat with that enemy.

After months of consideration following these studies, the War Department adopted an official emergency ration, sometimes referred to as the "Haversack" ration, in December 1896. It consisted of desiccated meat (bacon), hard bread, salt, pepper, coffee (or tea), and vegetables (pea-meal) molded into cakes and hermetically sealed in one-pound cans. It also included saccharin as a sugar substitute, and tobacco, products which were thought, at the time, to be a boon to health.

Ironically, after all this trouble, the emergency ration would prove to be of little use in the next war, in which tropical climates played havoc with the canned meat.

REVOLVING FUND

In 1874, Secretary of War William W. Belknap suggested allowing the proceeds of commissary store sales to be applied to the purchase of new commissary supplies during the same fiscal year in which the sales were made. A year later, Congress agreed. Proceeds from the sales were exempted from being sent back to the Treasury and could be used immediately to



Custer's Last Commissary

HE NEW POST COMMISSARY storehouse and sales room at Fort Abraham Lincoln, Dakota Territory, was Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer's last commissary. The building is pictured below during a band drill in 1877, a year after Custer's death. Custer had often taken the band with him into the field, where it frequently played the song the 7th Cavalry had adopted as its own, "Garryowen." Fortunately for its members, the band had not accompanied him to the Little Bighorn.

It was from this building that the men drew their supplies prior to the fateful ride to the valley of the Little Bighorn in May 1876. It was probably from this facility that, in 1874, Elizabeth "Libbie" Custer purchased the seeds for the vegetable garden that started out with such promise, only to be devoured by a horde of marauding grasshoppers.

The building's construction was based upon prototype plans (above)

included in the Army Regulations of 1871. Sales were made over the counter in the issuing room, shown in the upper right corner of the floor plan. Specific plans for the Fort Abraham Lincoln commissary were drawn up in 1873, and the building was completed later that year. Although they were based upon the regulations, the local plans called for a building twice as long as the 1871 prototype. A comparison of the drawing and the photograph will show that the commissary building actually constructed at the post was double the length shown in the regulation plan. This building, the Custer house, a barrack and several blockhouses have been reconstructed at what is now Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park. The commissary building now houses a gift shop and an exhibit area.

Floor plan, Army Regulations, 1871: photo: State Historical Society of North Dakota



Trials and Triumphs: THE STORY of HENRY O. FLIPPER

N A WHITE HOUSE ceremony on February 19, 1999, President Bill Clinton issued a posthumous official pardon to Lt. Henry Ossian Flipper, who in 1882 was dishonorably discharged from the Army for conduct unbecoming an officer. Clinton's presidential pardon wiped out a 117-year-old decision that had been upheld by military courtsmartial and approved by President Chester A. Arthur

Flipper is important to commissary history because his military career ended due to infractions he allegedly committed as an Army lieutenant and assistant commissary of subsistence at Fort Davis, Texas.

He is more widely remembered, however, as the first African-American to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy; and, as such, he is probably one of the most famous people to ever hold the position that today we would call deputy store director or store administrator.

Clinton's pardon legitimized the efforts of Flipper and his supporters to reverse an original verdict they viewed as unnecessary and unjust, resulting in the premature end of his military career. The verdict caused him lifelong personal grief, and did all African-Americans—as well as all fair-minded, unprejudiced U.S. citizens—a great disservice.

Flipper was born a slave in Thomasville, Georgia, in 1856. By 1864, with the help of another slave, he was learning to read—and by doing so was risking severe punishment, since it was illegal for slaves to learn to read and write.

At the end of the Civil War he was freed. He accompanied his family to Atlanta, where his father found work as a shoemaker. That enabled Henry to continue his education. First, he was tutored by the wife of an ex-

Confederate captain; later, he attended several schools set up for the freedmen by the American Missionary Association; eventually, he attended Atlanta University for three years.

When he entered West Point in 1873, he was the fifth African-American to enter the Academy, but the previous four had all been forced to leave. Although several hundred thousand black soldiers had fought with courage and distinction during the Civil War just a few years previously, white society persisted in believing that black troops could effectively function only under the command of white officers.

Flipper was therefore unwanted and resented by many in the tight fraternity of Army officers. Although he later stated his instructors always treated him courteously, most of his classmates ostracized him. Nonetheless, he persevered and graduated on schedule, placing fiftieth



CADET HENRY FLIPPER poses in his West Point uniform while at the U.S. Military Academy. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army News Service. Opposite page: courtesy University of Texas at El Paso

in a class of seventy-six.

Flipper was initially assigned to the 10th Cavalry at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. The 10th was one of two famous all-black cavalry regiments in the Army, known as the Buffalo Soldiers. Within the Army and among the Indians, the Buffalo Soldiers were widely acknowledged to be among the finest soldiers in the service. However, they would continue to be led by white officers because of the stereotype of "Negro inferiority." It was not until 1948—after World War II—that the armed forces would be desegregated.

He and his men were at one point ordered to dig a ditch to drain stagnant, mosquito-breeding pools of water; that ditch at Fort Sill not only remains today, it is a national landmark known as "Flipper's Ditch." But this was hardly the kind of duty that Flipper or his men



Despite his humiliation in the court-martial, [Henry] Flipper is one of the most famous people to have ever worked in the commissaries.

sought on the frontier.

After two years at Fort Sill, he was assigned as assistant commissary at Fort Davis. In those days, "commissary" could mean a person as well as a building. Flipper had a multifaceted role of ordering and issuing subsistence rations, ordering rations that were served in the post mess hall, and selling goods to officers and enlisted men in the sales commissary, which at that time was not much more than a table set up in the commissary warehouse.

In 1881, the commanding officer at Fort Davis accused Flipper of failing to properly account for commissary money entrusted to him—in other words, of stealing commissary money—to the tune of almost \$3,800.

Labeled a common thief, he stood trial, but a general court-martial acquitted him, having found no evidence to support the charge. However, it did convict him of conduct unbecoming an officer because his commanding officer asserted that Flipper had lied to him about the commissary accounts.

Flipper's being cashiered remained a point of contention among his supporters for years, especially since he had been found innocent of any actual wrongdoing. They viewed the whole affair as bizarre and found it hard to understand how the court could have convicted him of anything.

Over the years, many historians have dissected Flipper's case and found no motive for his alleged lies. If there had been no theft, why would Flipper have lied?

Upon attaining his hard-earned position after four tough years of careful silence and dignity in the face of hostility at West Point, why would he endanger his career with either a blatant lie or a brazen theft of what was, at the time, a huge amount of money? Why would he steal any money at all, when his father was by then a successful businessman?

His conviction had devastating effects, precisely because he was the first African-American to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy. People who wished to keep blacks out of West Point used him as an example of how Africans—and former slaves in particular—were, as a group, "untrustworthy" and "simply not ready" to become Army officers.

His conviction also contributed to the segregationist sentiment and "Jim Crow" legal restrictions that were common in the United States in the late nineteenth century, when African-Americans were routinely denied positions of responsibility or advancement in countless professions.

Although Flipper's court-martial damaged the military and civilian career opportunities of other African-Americans, he was far from

defeated. In fact, he went on to lead an extraordinary life.

In 1887, he owned a civil and mining engineering office in Arizona. He opened his own land-surveying firm in 1890, and surveyed the boundaries of several Western states and Latin American republics. He was editor of the *Nogales* (Arizona)



Sunday Herald in 1901. His command of Spanish and his knowledge of Mexican law helped him become a special agent for the Department of Justice's Court of Private Land Claims from 1893 to 1910. The government, in fact, published his translation of Spanish and Mexican Land Laws in 1895.

Although he moved on from his days in uniform, Flipper continued to try and clear his name. In 1898, his first attempt to get his court-martial reviewed ended in failure.

He served as an engineer for a silver mining company, and later worked as a field representative for several U.S. petroleum companies in Venezuela. He became a translator for the Senate subcommittee on Mexican affairs in 1919; and then, crowning a comeback to rival all comebacks, in 1922 he became an assistant secretary of the interior. He retired in 1931, returned to Atlanta, and died there in 1940.

Flipper was never married and had no children, but he has many living relatives. One of them, his grandniece, Irsle Flipper King, was instrumental in starting the drive for Flipper's pardon in the 1950s. Ultimately, her persistence prompted the Army to reexamine the case trial transcripts in 1976.

In December 1976, the Army reversed the decision of the 1882 court, holding Flipper had been convicted because of racism and the desire to remove him from the officers' rolls. Citing the obvious racial bias of the original proceedings, the Army changed the terms of Flipper's discharge from dishonorable to honorable.

Following his exoneration, Flipper's remains were reburied with full military honors in Thomasville, Georgia, where he had been born into slavery. The local post office has been renamed in his honor. Finally, since only a president could formally overturn President Arthur's approval of the court-martial's decision, President Clinton did that in 1999, and Lt. Henry O. Flipper's name was finally fully cleared.

Today, the family reportedly has no intention of moving Flipper's remains to Arlington National Cemetery, although he now qualifies for burial there.

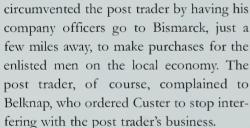
purchase new supplies. This in effect set up the first revolving fund, under which commissaries still operate.

BELKNAP'S SCANDAL

Belknap will be forever associated with commissaries and post traders on the Great Plains, if only because of one of the more interesting scandals of nineteenth-century America. He became embroiled with Lt. Col. George A. Custer in a high-profile controversy regarding the post trader at Fort Abraham Lincoln in the Dakota Territory. Within two years, one man would

be dead and the other would have resigned in disgrace, but the scandal would have long-term repercussions.

In 1874, soldiers at Fort Lincoln complained to Custer about the post trader's high prices. Apparently the commissary was of no help, either because it was newly constructed and was not yet open, or because it couldn't keep enough items in stock. In any case, Custer



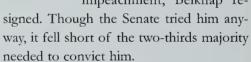
At the same time, a related scandal that wasn't kept in check by military channels arose at Fort Robinson and the Red Cloud Agency in Nebraska and gradually became public knowledge. A Yale professor, O. C. Marsh, out West on a fossil-hunting expedition, was approached by Chief Red Cloud, who told him that the Indians were being issued inferior food and goods. Since this was the very problem that had led to the 1862 Sioux Uprising in Minnesota, Marsh became alarmed, brought the situation to the Army's attention, and contacted friends and family back East. It wasn't long before the newspapers heard about it, and that stirred up a public controversy that ultimately led to an investigation.

As it turned out, the events at Forts

Lincoln and Robinson were only hints of a major scandal that was about to obliterate Belknap's career. Ultimately, testimony made it clear that numerous post traders, contractors, freighters, and government employees were profiting enormously from their businesses at the reservations or on the posts. Food and money meant for the tribes or the men in uniform somehow never made it to them. At first, no legally admissible evidence was produced—at least, none that saw the light of day—but the game wasn't quite over.

Belknap eventually resigned when a

House investigating committee discovered he had been involved in the selling of post traders' concessions at Army posts, as well as Indian agency positions, for his personal gain—literally auctioning them off to the highest bidder, regardless of their qualifications or dedication to their duty. Many of them were shameless profiteers. When the House voted for impeachment, Belknap re-



William W. Belknap

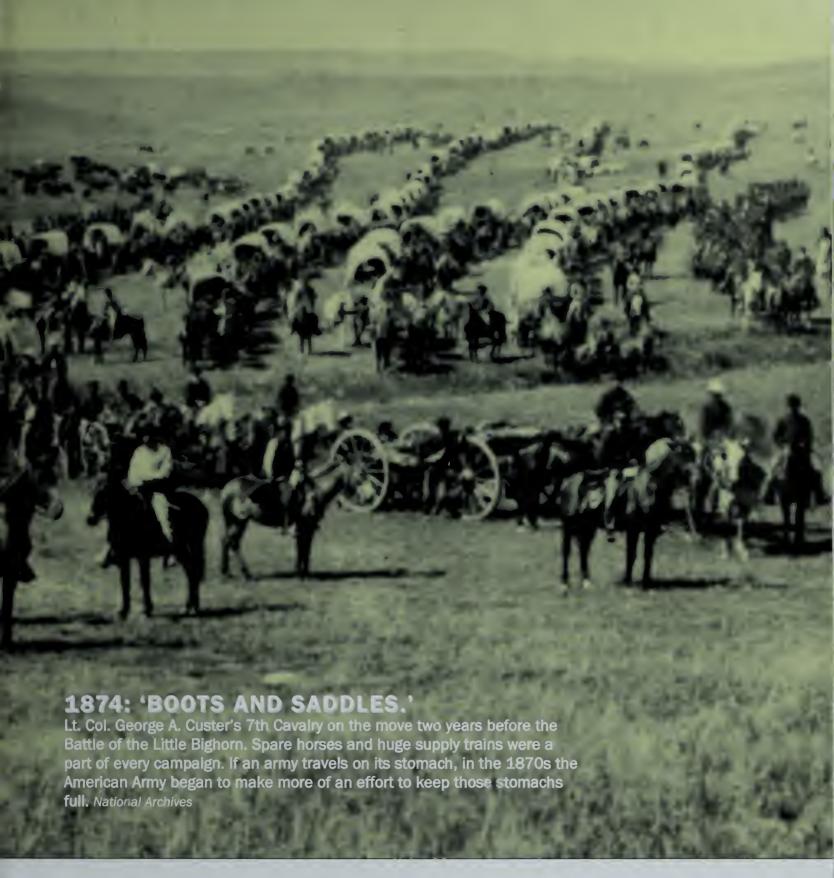
Custer, after offering to tell all he knew about Belknap's part in illegal and suspicious transactions involving post traders or Indian agents, was summoned to Washington to testify before the House of Representatives. He even included President Ulysses S. Grant and his brother, Orvil Grant, in his accusations. But his testimony consisted mostly of hearsay and gossip. Some observers felt his remarks were nothing but disjointed, paranoid ramblings. The whole episode gained Custer notoriety and a reprimand, though it probably didn't hurt his political ambitions.

Grant's forgiving nature enabled Custer to rejoin the 7th Cavalry at Fort Lincoln in time for the 1876 summer campaign against the Sioux and Cheyenne. This was unfortunate for Custer, of course. That June, Custer's Last Stand—the Battle of the Little Bighorn—emphatically ended the controversy surrounding Custer, Belknap, the post

traders, and the Indian agents.

Because of the scandal, some positive changes did take place regarding post traders. The Army took further control of the whole on-post resale system by contracting with the traders to sell items at cost price, with the contractor getting paid according to the number of customers he served.

Interestingly, seven years later, despite the military's deep suspicion of civilian merchants, Congress allowed vacancies in



the Commissary Department to be filled by civilians. They were apparently more trusted as government employees than as private-sector vendors.

CANTEENS & ALCOHOL

One of the great controversies of the late nineteenth century had to do with alcohol, the drug of choice of that era. Fortunately, commissaries never had anything to do with alcohol of any kind (other than rubbing alcohol) and so never got caught up in the controversy, but it is worth a mention here.

In the 1870s and 1880s, soldier-sponsored establishments that would later be known as canteens began springing up at various frontier posts. The first U.S. canteen for which records are known to exist was established at Vancouver Barracks in the state of Washington [formerly known as Columbia Barracks and Fort Vancouver]. Canteens provided a place for men to congregate and socialize, to read, gather around a piano and sing, play cards or bil-

liards, and the like. They also made beer and liquor available and sold them in a far more moral environment, at far lower prices, than commercial establishments. What cost a dollar elsewhere would cost between 18 and 50 cents at the canteens.

There were plenty of men who didn't drink and didn't like it when others did. When a drunken brawl at a post trader's bar at Fort D. A. Russell (today's F. E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming) resulted in a soldier's death, more than two hundred enlist-

... the War Department authorized a new uniform for commissary sergeants, specifying that the badge for the collar, hat, and cap would be a crescent of white metal. Today, the crescent moon shape remains indicative of subsistence and is used on boxes containing edibles.

ed men at the post sent a petition to President Rutherford B. Hayes, calling for an end to liquor sales on all posts. Hayes, a temperance advocate, was probably responding to the specific incident at Fort Russell when he banned the sale of hard liquor on military posts by post traders and sutlers. Unfortunately, this encouraged the proliferation of off-post "Hog Ranches" that offered whiskey, gambling, and prostitutes.

The canteens grew in popularity because of the lack of civilian traders and because of the low prices. The canteens were permitted because they kept the men safely on post.

NAVAL EVENTS

The Navy did not yet have commissary stores, but it was modernizing in other ways. By the 1890s it was starting to become a steel navy, forsaking wooden ves-

sels forever. Of particular note here is the launching of the cruiser USS *Olympia* in 1893. This was the first ship in America's turn-of-the-century Navy to have a food refrigeration unit.

It also had "scuttlebutts," water coolers or fountains located near the coal scuttles on each side of the ship. The sailors, beset by the 110-degree heat below decks, would sit (this, according to one theory, provided the "butt" of the word) by these fountains and trade gossip. It doesn't take much imagination to see how *scuttlebutt* became slang for *rumor*.

Other changes were coming. In 1896, the Navy established the first ship's canteen aboard the USS *Indiana*. Initially, it sold only beer, but the item selection soon expanded. Within a dozen years, the Navy would realize that relying on bumboats to provide sales items was becoming obsolete.

THE CRESCENT MOON SYMBOL

Several other developments in the years between the Civil War and the Spanish-American War are worth mentioning here. The position of commissary sergeant was permanently established in 1873. Two weeks later, the War Department authorized a new uniform for commissary sergeants, specifying that the badge for the collar, hat, and cap would be a crescent of white metal. Today, the crescent moon shape remains indicative of subsistence and is used on boxes containing edibles.

Two familiar faces retired from key positions. After thirty-six years in the Subsistence Department, the last ten of which were as commissary general of subsistence, Brig. Gen. Amos B. Eaton retired in 1874. In 1882, Montgomery Meigs stepped down as quartermaster general after nearly twenty-one years in the position.



CHRONOLOGY of KEY EVENTS

1866

1866

Food Business: The great cattle drives began out of Texas, providing beef for Eastern and Northern markets.

APRIL 2, 1866

SHORTAGES in the rations became common at posts on the Great Plains. William A. Murphy, 18th Infantry, said that "a hungry man could have eaten the entire two day's rations at one meal and asked for more."

At Fort McDowell, Arizona Territory—a typical isolated garrison suffering from improper diet—severe dysentery killed fifteen men. (Rickey, Don Jr., Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars, p. 248; Utley, Robert M., Frontier Regulars: the United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891, p. 87)

APRIL 2, 1866

WAR DEPARTMENT General Orders No. 20 (one source says April 13) directed the Subsistence Department to "purchase reasonable quantities of the articles usually required for the subsistence of an officer, and cause the same to be forwarded to posts and stations remote from markets, where officers are mainly dependent upon the Subsistence Department for supplies, or where they cannot purchase groceries at reasonable prices." When considering this reference to remote posts, it's important to note that this order was issued before the legislation of July 28, 1866, which established sales commissaries. (General Order No. 20, 2 Apr 1866; Maj. Samuel T. Cushing, Subsistence Dept., U.S. Army, "Subsistence Department: Splendid Record of the Personnel of the Corps, 1775-1893; Some Interesting Matters Never Before Published," in Army and Navy Register, 7 Sep 1895, p. 179)

JULY 25, 1866

A JOINT RESOLUTION of Congress (Public Resolution No. 56) provided that the Subsistence Department pay commutation of rations to Union soldiers who had been prisoners during the war. (Secretary of War, *Annual Report*, 14 Nov 1866)

JULY 28, 1866

SALES COMMISSARIES were established. Congress abolished sutlers. The Subsistence Department was tasked to furnish "sutlery" articles to be designated by the Inspectors General of the Army. This law established the first commissary sales

to men of all ranks, and made no restrictions as to the stores' location. The act was to take effect July 1, 1867.

According to an Army fact sheet published in 1959, "The intent of Congress was clearly to make the Subsistence Department in part the successor of the sutlers and at the same time limit the range of sales supplies to those officially designated by the Army itself." (Army Fact Sheet, *Origin and History of the Commissaries*, Nov 1959, p. 2)

However, failure to make a monetary appropriation for the new method of supplying the troops resulted in a delay in publishing the proposed regulations. This ultimately resulted in the publication of Gen. Orders No. 59 on 30 May 1867. (Annual Report, Commissary-General of Subsistence, 19 Oct 1867, pp. 570, 581; AAFES, p. 23; Cushing, "Subsistence Department," p. 19; Section 1144 Revised Statutes; 39th Congress, Session I, Ch. 299, Section 25; General Order No. 6, 26 Jan 1867; 14 Stat. 366, 28 Jul 1866; Hearings, Special Subcommittee on Resale Activities of the Armed Forces, 24 May 1949, No. 104)

SPRING 1867

1867

AT FORT PHIL KEARNY, Wyoming Territory, the lack of fruits and vegetables resulted in every man there contracting scurvy. In the spring the soldiers recovered by eating an abundance of wild onions. (Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, p. 87)

APRIL 15, 1867

congress nullified the Act of July 28, 1866, by passing a new resolution that authorized a trading establishment at any military post on the frontier, not near any town or city and situated between 100 degrees west longitude and the eastern boundary of California, whenever the Army determined an establishment was needed to serve emigrants, freighters, and travelers. The 100-degree longitude line runs north-south, roughly down the middle of North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. (War Department General Order No. 54, 15 Apr 1867; Army Fact Sheet, *Origin and History of Commissaries*, Nov 1959, p. 3)

MAY 24 and MAY 30, 1867 **PUBLICATION** of General Orders No. 58 and 59, respectively, implemented the congressional action of April 15, and also permitted the sutlers

History of American Military Commissaries

to trade with the troops, but *only* at frontier posts not in the vicinity of any town or city, until further notice.

Commissary sales were not restricted in such a fashion—they could take place in posts near towns.

Sutlers' reputations had worsened since the Civil War. They sold articles that soldiers at posts on the Great Plains could not get if there was no sales commissary or if the commissary was unable to procure those items. But sutlers provided this service at terribly high prices—at least in the eyes of men who earned \$13 per month. (Annual Report, Commissary-General of Subsistence, 19 Oct 1867, p. 581; TSA News Release 91-90, 28 Jun 1990; Andrist, The Long Death, p. 254; Events, p.1, says March 30, but this may refer to G.O. No. 54 of 15 Apr 1867)

According to Hearings, Special Subcommittee on Resale Activities of the Armed Services, Senate Joint Resolution 33, 40th Congress, 1867, established post traderships to succeed sutlers, but this didn't officially occur until 1870.

JULY 1, 1867

THE ARMY opened the first commissary sales stores in the modern sense that officers and enlisted men were eligible to purchase goods directly from the Subsistence Department at cost. ("Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives," in *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1976, Part 8*, p. 412)

For years it was believed that the first sales store

opened at Fort Delaware, Delaware. In fact, all commissary storehouses technically became sales stores as of July 1. Fort Delaware was simply the earliest store mentioned in the existing historical records. (For references to Fort Delaware, see "Hearings, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, DoD Appropriations for 1976, Part 8, p. 412. Also, see Army Fact Sheet, Origins and History of Commissaries, Nov 1959, pp. 3-4, and Cushing, "Subsistence Department," pp. 177-80)

OCT. 4, 1867

CIRCULAR NO. 12, Office of the Commissary General of Subsistence, gave the first list of articles to be supplied to sales commissaries. This list allowed for liberal interpretation of the items authorized for sale. (Circular No. 12, Office of the Commissary-General of Subsistence, 4 Oct 1867; Cushing, "Subsistence Department," pp. 177-80)

OCT. 28, 1867

THE COMMISSARY general directed specifically that Fort Delaware, Delaware, be supplied with those items authorized for sale to officers. (Cushing, "Subsistence Department," p. 180)

Cushing's article is probably the source of the notion that Fort Delaware's was the first sales commissary, a notion that, as explained above (see July 1, 1867), is not accurate. The article does confirm that from very early in the process, sales commissaries were operating at posts that were not remote, with the primary concerns being those of providing customer convenience, maintaining

REVISED RATIONS. Shortages in the rations became common at posts on the Great Plains. In one instance, a two-day marching ration consisted solely of seven four-inch squares of hardtack. However, on June 22, 1874, Congress changed the military ration to include twenty ounces fresh or salted beef, with permissible substitutes of sausages mutton, and drap lockled, or canned fish. These men of Troop C, 5th Cavalry, were no doubt glad for the change. With the opening of the Oklahoma Territory in 1889, the 5th Cavalry was tasked to arrest "boomers" and squatters who arrived too soon (as they are doing here with the man whose head is down)—hence the term "Sooners." National Archives

good prices, and putting the sutler out of business.

1868

Food Technology: Invention of the refrigerated railroad car enabled the transport of perishable foods to previously unreachable markets. The first shipment of fresh meat from Chicago using these rail cars didn't occur until 1877. Meanwhile, John Deere patented a steel plow that broke through the rock-hard Great Plains soil.

Food Business & Familiar Products: Canned Underwood Deviled Ham hit the market. Edmund McIlhenny first marketed TABASCO, a spicy pepper sauce.

In 2006, this product had the distinction of having the oldest existing food trademark still marketed in the United States—and the product is still sold in small bottles, reminiscent of the French perfume bottles McIlhenny used in 1868. (Elkort, Food, pp. 26-27)

GENERAL ORDER No. 18 directed chief commissaries of divisions and departments to "procure by purchase, or by requisition of the Commissary General of Subsistence, seed potatoes, garden seeds, and agricultural implements, for post gardens ... and forward them to the post Commissaries. [This referred to officers, not buildings.] Care will be taken that the seeds furnished are adapted to the climate and soil of the several posts. The articles will be accounted for as Subsistence property, and will be sold at contract or invoice prices." (Regulations for the Army of the United States, 17 Feb 1881, Section 2202)

GENERAL ORDER No. 79 attempted to limit the number and variety of articles being sold at sales commissaries and directed the commissary general of subsistence to submit lists of authorized items. (General Order No. 79, 25 Sept 1868; Cushing, "Subsistence Department," p. 180)

THE COMMISSARY general published a list of eighty-two items not included as part of the Army's basic ration to be sold at the commissaries. Apparently this list meant that the Subsistence Department was now able to implement the Act of July 1866, and was also able to have some control over its implementation. (See page 71 for the complete list. Circular No. 5, Office of the Commissary General of Subsistence, p. 12 Oct 1868; Army Fact Sheet,

Origins and History of Commissaries, Nov 1959, p. 5; TSA news release 91-90, 28 Jun 1990)

1869

MARCH 26, 1869 THE ADJUTANT General's Office gave permission to civilian contract surgeons to purchase subsistence stores in limited quantities, in cash, for themselves and their families. (Regulations of the Army, Feb. 17, 1881, Section 2223)

MAY 10, 1869

Food Business & Technology: The completion of the Transcontinental Railroad prompted the settling of the Great Plains. The railroad was able to quickly move foodstuffs between one coast and the other. As a result, food prices dropped.

1870

1870

Food Technology: William Lyman patented the first practical can opener. (Elkort, Food, p. 27)

JULY 15, 1870

CONGRESS established post traders who fulfilled much the same role as sutlers, though under stricter supervision. The post traders were permitted to continue after the sales commissaries became operational, but they could not sell articles sold by the commissaries. (AAFES, p. 24; TSA news release 91-90, 28 Jun 1990)

1872

MAY 8, 1872

LEGISLATION was proposed to sell off old government property (including old rations) and send money for these sales back to the Treasury. (Letter, Secretary of War, 7 Jan 1874: House Executive Document 52 [43-1])

1873

MARCH 3, 1873

THE COMMISSARY sergeant's position was established. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 132)

MARCH 20, 1873 GENERAL ORDER No. 38 authorized a new uniform for commissary sergeants, specifying the distinctive badge for the collar, hat, and cap would be a crescent of white metal. (LaFramboise, History of the Combat Support Branches: Branch of Service Insignia, p. 171)

JULY 1873

PLANS FOR a new commissary store house at Fort Abraham Lincoln, Dakota Territory, showed a building 200 feet long by 25 feet wide. (Source: Plans for Commissary Store-House, Department of Dakota, 1873, in DeCA historical files, courtesy Fort Abraham Lincoln Museum, State Historical Society of North Dakota)

SEPT. 25, 1868

1868

1868

1868

OCT. 12, 1868



LIBBIE CUSTER,

the wife of the famous George Armstrong Custer, pictured here about 1865, at the age of 23. She was probably the most famous American military spouse since Martha Washington. Her vegetable garden at Fort Abraham Lincoln in the Dakota Territory became famous when she wrote of its destruction by "an army of grasshoppers." After her husband's death in 1876, she became the first public voice of the modern military spouse by writing books about the life of a military wife on the Great Plains. Modern spouses would certainly identify with her stories of life at the far end of the supply line, as well as her accounts of having to endure separations and relocations. Photo courtesy of the Custer Battlefield Museum, www.custermusem.org

1874

1874

A DISPUTE arose between Secretary of War William W. Belknap and Lt. Col. George A. Custer regarding the post trader at Fort Abraham Lincoln. Custer's soldiers complained about high prices, so Custer had his officers go to nearby Bismarck to make purchases for the men. The post trader complained to Belknap, who told



Lt. Col. George A. Custer



Chief Red Cloud

stop interfering with the store's business. Meanwhile, O. C. Marsh, a professor from Yale, visited Fort Robinson and the Red Cloud Agency in Nebraska. While there, Chief Red Cloud told Marsh that the Indians were being issued inferior food and goods. Marsh went public, prompting a congressional

investigation. (Andrist, Long Death, pp. 253-54)

JAN. 7, 1874

WILLIAM W. Belknap, secretary of war, suggested modifying draft legislation that would allow commissary sales proceeds to be applied immediately to the purchase of new commissary stores (supplies). (Letter, Secretary of War, 7 Jan 1874: House Executive Document 52 [43-1])

SPRING -SUMMER 1874 AT FORT Abraham Lincoln, Dakota Territory, a "perfect army of grasshoppers" arrived and ate every garden on the post. This was the first of four years in a row in which grasshoppers plagued the Great Plains. One of the vegetable gardens so victimized belonged to Elizabeth "Libbie" Custer, her husband (Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer), his brother Tom, and the Custers' cook, Mary. (Elizabeth Custer, Boots and Saddles, pp. xiv, 140)

JUNE 22, 1874

REVISED STATUTE 1144, governing the sale of subsistence supplies, reiterated that "The officers of the subsistence department shall procure, and keep for sale to officers and enlisted men at cost prices, for cash or on credit, such articles as may, from time to time, be designated by the inspectors-general of the Army. An account of all sales on credit shall be kept, and the amounts due for the same shall be reported monthly to the Paymaster-General."

The revised ration included twenty ounces fresh or salted beef, with permissible substitutes of sausages, mutton, and dried, pickled, or canned fish. (Cassidy, *Products for the Army*, p. 2; J. Dyer, *Subsistence Supply*, II-3)

JUNE 23, 1874

BRIG. GEN. Alex E. Shiras became commissary general of subsistence. (see June 29, 1874)

JUNE 29, 1874

BRIG. GEN. Amos B. Eaton retired after thirtysix years in the Subsistence Department, the last ten as commissary general of subsistence.

1875

1875

U.S. *Military History:* The Army had twenty-five thousand soldiers.

1875

A STUDY conducted at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, concluded the U.S. ration fell below the the English ration in energy value and lacked vegetables and milk, leading to physical deterioration. (Dickson, *Chow*, pp. 21-23)

MARCH 3, 1875

CONGRESS passed the revised act proposed by Secretary of War William W. Belknap in 1874, which allowed the proceeds from sales of subsistence supplies to be used immediately to purchase new supplies. (Porter and Wilson, "Guide for Sales Officers, U.S. Army," from *Quartermaster Revien*, May-Jun 1936 p. 46; General Order No. 50, 1875; Regulations of the Army of the United States, 1881, p. 238, section 2194. Also, see entry for April 27,

1914) The commissary general of subsistence was empowered to make advance purchases for distant posts. Also, subsistence was authorized for Indians visiting military posts, a policy reaffirmed annually until March 3, 1899. (43rd Congress, Session I, Ch. 131, 1875; Hucles, Haversack, p. 132)

APRIL 14, 1875

SHIRAS STEPPED down as commissary general of subsistence. He was replaced by Brig. Gen. Robert MacFeely.

SEPT. 1, 1875

CONGRESS authorized rations for people on the Great Plains afflicted by plagues of grasshoppers. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 132)

1876

1876

U.S. Military History: U.S. Coast Guard Academy founded at New London, Connecticut.

MARCH 2, 1876

SECRETARY of War William W. Belknap resigned. A House investigation found he had profited from selling post traders' concessions to the highest bidders. The Senate tried him, but the vote fell short of the two-thirds majority needed for conviction. (Andrist, Long Death, p. 255; William Gardner Bell, Secretaries of War and Secretaries of the Army, Washington, 1982, p. 78)

MARCH 29, 1876 LT. COL. George A. Custer testified before the

House of Representatives about Belk-nap's illegal activities involving post traders. His testimony was mostly hearsay. Custer even implicated President Ulysses S. Grant and his brother, Orvil Grant. For this Custer was reprimanded and nearly suspended. (Andrist, Long Death, pp. 255-56; Jane R. Stewart, in introduction to Custer, Boots and Saddles, p.



President Ulysses S. Grant

JUNE 1876

DURING the 7th Cavalry's summer campaign, the daily ration was twelve hardtack crackers and a piece of "sowbelly" (dried salt pork) per man (Rickey, Forty Miles a Day, p. 248)

JUNE 25, 1876

U.S. Military History: The death of Custer and more than two hundred of his troopers at the Battle of the Little Bighorn ended the controversy surrounding Lt. Col. George A. Custer, William W. Belknap, Orvil Grant, and the post traders.

1876

AS A RESULT of the Belknap scandal, the Army took control of the post resale system by contracting with civilian post traders to sell items on a cost price basis, with the contractor being paid according to the number of customers he served.

1877

1877

TRUMPETER Ami Frank Mulford of the 7th Cavalry commented on the monotony of field rations: "Hardtack, bacon and coffee for breakfast; raw bacon and 'tack for dinner; fried bacon and hard bread for supper." (Rickey, Forty Miles a Day, pp. 249-50)

1877

PRICE COMPARISONS: Bootleg whiskey sold for \$1 per half pint at Fort Berthold, Dakota Territory; legal whiskey (though an inferior grade) was available for 30 cents per half pint at "The Widow's," a privately owned bar, near Fort D. A. Russell (modern F. E. Warren Air Force Base), Wyoming. Beer was available at most Western posts for 50 cents to \$1 per quart, but the post canteens later sold it for 18 to 50 cents. (Rickey, Forty Miles a Day, p. 200)

Meanwhile, a soldier was killed during a drunken brawl at a post trader's bar at Fort D. A. Russell. After that, two hundred enlisted men at the post petitioned President Rutherford B. Hayes to end liquor sales on post. (Holland, Major Stephen L., (ed.), From Mules to Missiles: A History of Francis E. Warren Air Force Base and Its Predecessors, p. 6-3)

1877

New Food Products: C. H. Hires began making root beer. Margarine, dreamed up by French Emperor Napoleon III, began to be mass-produced in the United States under the name "butterine." (Elkort, Food, p. 27)

1878

1878

THE ARMY Established a travel ration of nonperishable subsistence. (Cassidy, Products for the Army, p. 2, fn 14; J. Dyer, Subsistence Supply, II-4)

1878

1879

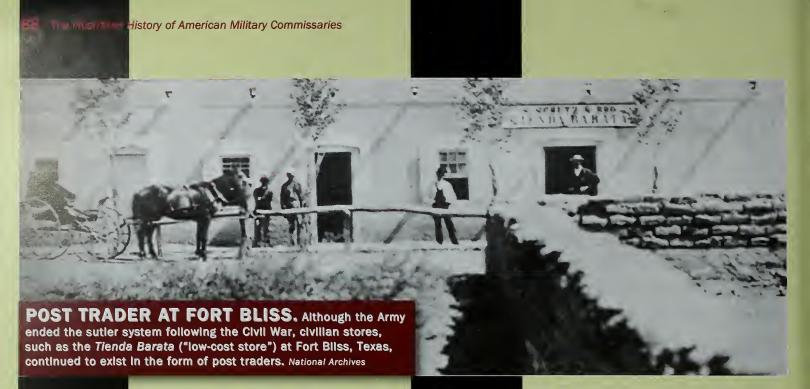
THE ARMY detailed men for ten-day tours as cooks and bakers. (Utley, Frontier Regulars, pp. 85-86; Senate Executive Documents, 45th Congress, 2nd Session, No. 56, p. 22)

1879

Food Business & Technology: Invention of the first practical cash register.

1879

GENERAL ORDER No. 88 stated that civilian



employees at remote posts could buy subsistence articles from the sales commissary at cost prices if the items weren't otherwise available. A 10-percent charge was added, and they could pay only with cash. (Regulations of the Army, Feb. 17, 1881, Section 2224)

JUNE 23, 1879

WITH THE Army Appropriation Act, Congress attached a 10-percent charge to all commissary items (except tobacco) to help pay spoilage and transport costs. (Forty-Sixth Congress, Session I, Ch. 35, 23 Jun 1879: Army Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year ending June 30, 1880, Revised Statute, 1149; Office of the Quartermaster General Historical Branch, Origin and History of Sales Commissaries in the U.S. Army, Nov 1959, p. 5; War Department General Order No. 64, 30 Jun 1879)

1879

CONGRESS established a subsistence allowance for women accompanying troops. This was obviously meant for wives. This provision was renewed May 4, 1880, February 24, 1881, and June 30, 1882. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 132)

JUNE 28-30, 1879 THE ACT OF June 28, 1879, and General Orders No. 64, June 30, 1879, specified that officers and retired officers could purchase from the Subsistence Department any articles classified as subsistence stores for the use of himself or his family. Retirees apparently had to pay cash. No mention was made of retired enlisted men. (Regulations of the Army of the United States, Feb. 17, 1881, Sections 2212, 2215, and 2220)

1880

THE FIRST known U.S. canteen was established at Vancouver Barracks, Washington, formerly known as Columbia Barracks and Fort Vancouver. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 133)

1881

JAN. 1, 1881

THE COMMISSARY sales list was expanded to include brushes and other non-edibles. (War Department, General Order No. 2, 1 Jan 1881)

FEB. 2, 1881

PRESIDENT Rutherford B. Hayes, a temperance advocate, banned the sale of hard liquor on

posts by post traders and sutlers (see 1877). The ban encouraged the spread of off-post "Hog Ranches," offering whiskey, gambling, and prostitutes. (General Order No. 34, 22 Feb 1881; Utley, Frontier Regulars, p. 87)



President Rutherford B. Haves

FEB. 17, 1881

SECTION 2217 of Army regulations, issued effective this date, stated that "Under sec-

tions 1144 and 1149, Revised Statutes, the Subsistence Department provides for sales to officers and enlisted men of tobacco and certain other articles, in addition to the component parts of the ration ..." This was a summary and restating of General Orders No. 79, 1868, and No. 122, 1874.

Reflecting continuing concern over the need for fresh vegetables, section 2201 of the 1881 regulations restated the regulations of the Subsistence Department and General Order No. 122 of 1874: "Fresh vegetables may, on the written order of the Department Commander, be procured by the Subsistence Department in limited quantities for immediate use, for sale to companies at contract or invoice price ... Potatoes and onions, however, will be furnished only at posts

1880

where they cannot be cultivated or purchased at reasonable rates." Section 2212, restating previous Subsistence Department regulations as well as the Act of June 28, 1879, and General Orders No. 64 of 1879, made provisions for the retired officers to purchase subsistence articles at cost, for cash. (see entry for June 28-30, 1879) Section 2214, quoting existing Subsistence Department regulations, stated that an Army officer could designate a member of his family to make subsistence purchases during his absence. Sections 2215 and 2220 confirmed that active-duty officers and enlisted men could make subsistence purchases on credit.

1881

AT FORT DAVIS, Texas, Lt. Henry Ossian Flipper, acting commissary of subsistence, was

accused of stealing almost \$3,800 in government funds. Court-martialed, he was found innocent of embezzlement but was nonetheless declared guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer. He was dishonorably discharged, but he later went on to become a successful surveyor, engineer, newspaper editor, and translator.



Henry O. Flipper

He eventually became assistant secretary of the interior. (Lindor Reynolds and Lynn Radeka, Forts & Battlefields of the Old West, 1991, p. 137; U.S. News and World Report, 1 Mar 1999, p. 12; Douglas Kiker, A Slave's Family Celebrates Pardon, Associated Press, 19 Feb 1999)

1882

JAN. 16, 1882

CIVILIAN employees stationed at remote posts could shop in the sales commissaries. (War Department, General Order No. 4, 16 Jan 1882)

FEB. 6, 1882

BRIG. GEN. Montgomery Meigs retired as quartermaster general after almost twenty-one years.

JUNE 30, 1882

CONGRESS renewed spouse subsistence. Post traders and laundrymen were authorized to furnish goods not exceeding \$7 in value per soldier to recruits at depots. (Hucles, Haversack, pp. 132-33)

Food Business: Barney Kroger opened his first grocery store in Cincinnati, Ohio.

MARCH 3, 1883

CIVILIANS were allowed to fill vacancies in the Commissary Department. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 133)

1884

JULY 5, 1884

CONGRESS repealed the 10-percent charge that had been established June 23, 1879, and again stipulated that sales of subsistence supplies to troops by the Subsistence Department would be at cost price only. Cost price was defined as "the cost of the last lot of the article received ... prior to the first day of the month in which the sale is made." (U.S. Congress, Act of July 5, 1884, 23 Stat. 108, USC 10:1238, Par. 1994 Mil. Laws 1929; 48th Congress, Sess I, Ch. 217; Operational Alternatives, 94 [Jan 1975 OMB Commissary and Exchange Study]; Hucles, Haversack, p. 133; Porter and Wilson, "Guide," p. 46)

1885

CANNED BAKED beans were added to the issue of supplies in the mid-1880s. (Rickey, Forty Miles a Day, p. 249)

1886

1886

New Food Product: Coca-Cola was introduced when Dr. John Pemberton, an Atlanta druggist, invented a cough syrup and an employee added carbonated water. (Elkort, Food, p. 28)

SEPT. 4, 1886

U.S. Military History: Geronimo, the Chiracahua Apache leader, surrendered.

1887

1887

IN THE LATE 1880s, the addition of canned tomatoes to the field rations helped combat scurvy and other diseases caused by improper nutrition. (Rickey, Forty Miles a Day, p. 249)

1888

1888

ALCOHOL was prohibited at canteens. This resulted in much protest and prompted soldiers to seek liquor off post. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 133)

1889

FEB. 1, 1889

MAJ. GEN. John Schofield, commanding general of the Army, published regulations for the establishment of post canteens. This order rescinded the prohibition of alcohol at canteens. (AAFES, 25-8; General Orders No. 10, 1 Feb 1889; Hucles, Haversack, p. 133)

AUG. 30, 1889

MEMBERS of the Signal Corps were allowed to patronize subsistence stores under the same regu-

1883

be used in constructing exchanges or post gardens-but not commissaries. (Dyer, II-7; 10 USC 75; Hucles, Haversack, p. 133) BRIG. GEN. B. DuBarry retired from the Army. BRIG. GEN. J. P. Hawkins became commissary general of subsistence. 1893 THE CRUISER USS Olympia was launched. This was the first ship in America's turn-of-thecentury steel navy to have a food refrigeration unit. (Interview, Dr. Peter D. Skirbunt with Paul De Orsay and Maynard "Chip" Poole, Independence Seaport Museum, Philadelphia, 1995)

New Food Product: F. W. Rueckheim, who got his start selling popcorn in the streets of Chicago after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, joined with his brother, Louis, to produce a new confection for the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Made from popcorn, peanuts, and molasses, it later became known as "Cracker Jack"—which was Victorian-era slang for "That's great!" Meanwhile, Thomas Adimon and two other North Dakota millers, facing bankruptcy, marketed Cream of Wheat—a hot breakfast porridge made from wheat farina. (Grit, 1 Aug 1993)

JAN. 28, 1893 CONGRESS abolished post traders due largely



to the success of post canteens. (Hargood & Skaer, AAFES, pp. 3, 27; Stat 426, 1893)

1894

STARTING this year, all new Army barracks provided a space for company cooking and messing. (*Annual Report*, 24 Nov 1896, p. 10)

New Food Products & Food Marketing: Milton Hershey discovered how to make a bar of chocolate and began selling Hershey's Bars. Dr. John Kellogg invented wheat flakes, while his brother, Will, came up with corn flakes, made from corn and malt. Eventually, Kellogg's Corn Flakes gained widespread acceptance, turning Will into a millionaire. Meanwhile, C. W. Post developed Grape-Nuts, and "Post Toasties." Post became a millionaire and was credited with starting "centsoff" coupon merchandising when marketing Grape-Nuts. (Elkort, Food, pp. 28, 83-84)

BRIG. GEN. J. P. Hawkins retired as commissary general of subsistence.

BRIG. GEN. M. R. Morgan became the new commissary general of subsistence.

1895

MORGAN CALLED for a series of tests to choose an official emergency ration. The secretary of war approved the tests on May 6, 1895.

TESTS to establish an official emergency ration were conducted. As a result, "instant" products, including coffee and soup, would make it to the civilian market, becoming familiar products to the entire country. (Dickson, *Chow*, p. 23)

ARMY POST exchange stores were established to sell hard goods and clothing to the troops in much the same fashion that the commissaries were selling food. The commissaries continued to sell "at cost price" while the exchanges sold at a profit, with the profits going primarily to store upkeep and soldier-sponsored activities. Also, the commissaries received money from the Army's budget, but exchanges did not. Sutlers were authorized at only two garrisoned posts. (General Order No. 46, 1895; Annual Report, 24 Nov 1896, p. 10)

1896

Technology & Transportation: Henry Ford drove his first automobile.



1896

THE FIRST official Navy canteen was established aboard the USS *Indiana*. It initially sold nothing but beer. (*Navy Commissary Program*, p. 9; Navy Exchange Service Command, 50 Years of Serving You, p. 2. Hereafter, cited as NEXCOM, Fifty Years)

DEC. 5, 1896

THE WAR Department adopted an official emergency ration, referred to as the "Haversack" ration. It consisted of desiccated meat, hard bread, coffee or tea, and vegetables molded into cakes and hermetically sealed in one-pound cans. It also included saccharin as a sugar substitute, salt, pepper, and tobacco. (Elliott Cassidy, *The Development of Meat, Dairy, Poultry, and Fish Products for the Army, QMC Historical Studies No. 7; Operational Rations, 6; General Orders No. 49, 5 Dec 1896; Annual Report, 10 Nov 1987)*

1896

1897

New Food Products: Leonard Hershfield made a chewy candy roll and named it after his daughter, Tootsie. Publication of Fannie Farmer's Boston Cook Book was the first cookbook to standardize ingredient measurements. (Elkort, Food, p. 28)

1897

BRIG. GEN. M. R. Morgan, commissary general of subsistence, stepped down from his post.

JAN. 18, 1897

BRIG. GEN. Thomas C. Sullivan was selected commissary general of subsistence. (Secretary of War, *Annual Report*, 10 Nov 1897, p. 400)

MAY 17 - 28, 1897 **TROOP E,** 1st Cavalry at **Fort Sill, Oklahoma** conducted a twelve-day practice march using the new emergency ration. Forty-six men covered an average of twenty-one miles per day. A ten-man detachment conducted a march on full rations as a control group. The tests validated the ration, but the military noted that the exercise wasn't under combat conditions. (Secretary of War, *Annual Report*, 10 Nov 1897, pp. 94, 401-07)

SEPT. 29, 1894

1894

1894

OCT. 8, 1894

APRIL 17, 1895

MAY - AUGUST 1895

JULY 25, 1895

1896





Cammissary Interiors

▶ 1936: BALBOA,

Panama. This display area in the Panama Canal Commission's main store was considered state of the art in 1936 and exemplifies why an Army guidebook in 1935 called this facility "one of the largest and most complete stores in the world." U.S. military families could patronize the store, and they were undoubtedly impressed. The Army took over this commissary's operation in 1979.

Panama Canal Commission





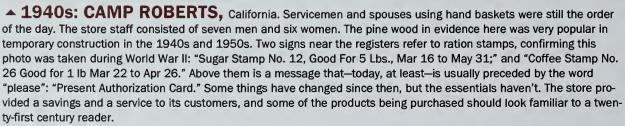
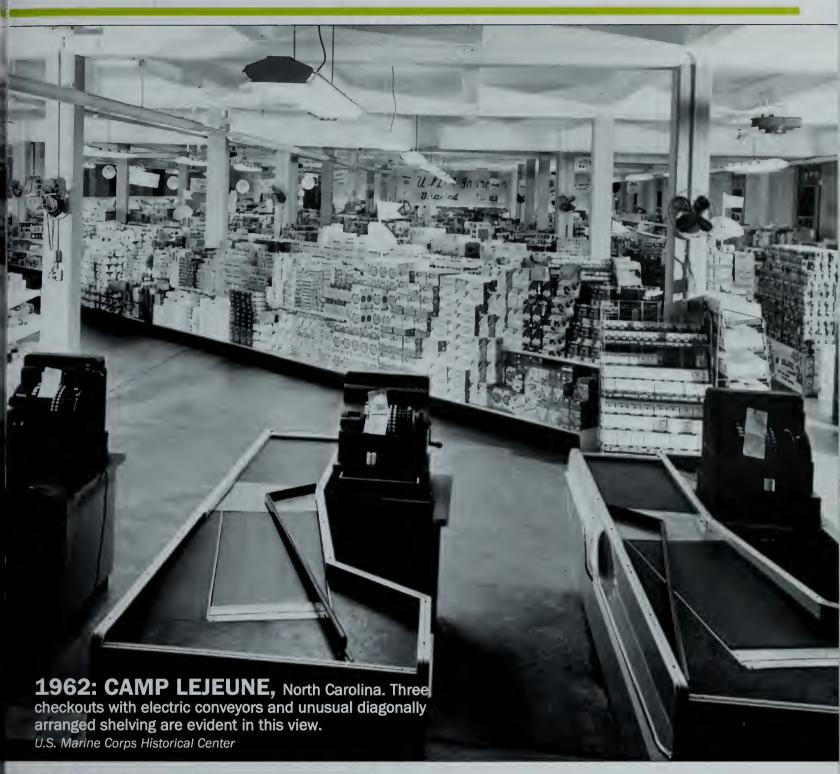
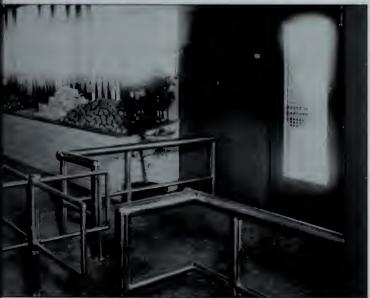


Photo courtesy of Gary McMaster, Camp Roberts Historical Museum, Camp Roberts, California









◆ 1947: WASHINGTON HEIGHTS,

Japan. As in many modern stores, upon entering (in this case through a turnstile), the customer quickly found himself in the produce section. Note the table with the scales and bags. DeCA historical file





▲ 1963: HILL Air Force Base, Utah. The self-service meat department was supplemented with what cut-to-order service.

Military Market, Army Times Publications

◆ 1960s-70s: RAF WETHERSFIELD, England. Overseas stores were getting slightly larger, a little more like their state-side counterparts. DeCA historical file

1958: ELLSWORTH ▶

Air Force Base, South Dakota.
Customers lining up for checkout effectively block two narrow aisles.
None of the customers seem happy, except for one lady who must know that a photographer is pointing a camera in her direction.
Under these tight conditions, going to the commissary was less than enjoyable, a fact that wasn't conducive to frequent return visits. For an exterior view of this commissary, see page 39. DeCA historical file





◆ 1948: NASUGBU BEACH, Japan.

This store was almost entirely self-service. Note the active duty cashiers and Japanese carryout clerks. The signs at the register say: "New commissary and gasoline cards are now being issued at the downtown [Tokyo] commissary only. These cards will not be honored until 1st April."

Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army Quartermaster Museum







Photo courtesy NB San Diego commissary

Diego.

▲ BERCHTESGADEN, Germany. In the 1970s and 1980s, this commissary's biggest customers were American servicemen and their families on vacation. Five American hotels in southern Bavaria catered to the U.S. military, and American embassies and consulates in neighboring countries. The shipment pictured here was bound for Belgrade, Yugoslavia. Other destinations were Vienna (Austria), Sofia (Bulgaria), Riyadh (Saudi Arabia), Budapest (Hungary), and even Kiev (USSR). Military Market, Army Times Publications



▲ 1987: INCIRLIK, TURKEY. This safety sign exemplifies the health hazards encountered with some food products at many locations overseas. Local growing and fertilization practices did not always meet U.S. standards; because of long shipment times, chances increased that even goods grown in the United States could become contaminated with pesticides or any of a multitude of bacterial strains. No matter where vegetables are grown or sold, precautionary washing is always a good idea. Military Market, Army Times Publications



◆ 1970: WIESBADEN,

Germany. At the time, this was an Air Force store, but it became an Army store in 1979. It was big and spacious with thirteen large, manual cash registers. Scanning was an emerging technology that hadn't arrived at commissaries, or even at civilian stores, just yet.

Military Market, Army Times Publications



GREAT NAMA LAKES BASE OREO COOKIES IN CO.

▲ 1986: LACKLAND Air Force Base, Texas. This photograph was taken during a grand reopening following a renovation. This was a scene in the days before single-line queuing became common practice. Note that the floor tile was color-coded, showing everyone where to line up. AFCOMS photo, DeCA historical file

▲ 1987: GREAT LAKES, Illinois. The sign promoting one of America's favorite cookies notes that the brand is as old as the base. Store personnel stacked the display to resemble a ship.

Photo courtesy of Naval Training Center Great Lakes commissary



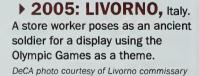
◆ 1980s: FORT BENNING,

Georgia, produce section. This store was named the U.S. Army Troop Support Agency's "Best Store, Worldwide" in 1983. Compare this view with the 1942 photo of the old Fort Benning store's interior on page 146. DeCA historical file



▲ 1999: VOGELWEH, Germany. The new store, opened in 1997, was a bigger, brighter, more modern commissary than the one it replaced.

DeCA-Europe





▲ 2001: YOKOTA Air Base, Japan. The "Grab & Go" department (above) was an innovation prompted by DeCA's third director, Maj. Gen. Robert J. Courter Jr. The "fast food" catered to patrons who needed a good meal in a hurry, and was similar to such sections in civilian supermarkets. DeCA facilities directorate



▲ 2002: NEW RIVER, North Carolina. The new décor package design at Marine Corps Air Station New River can be seen in the background. By this time, scanners had been standard in most stores for years. DeCA facilities







▲ 2000: FORT BRAGG (North Store), North Carolina. Colorful decorations brighten an aisle. DeCA photo: Pete Skirbunt

◆ 1998: QUANTICO Marine Corps

Training Base, Virginia. The floral section at the newly remodeled commissary. DeCA facilities directorate

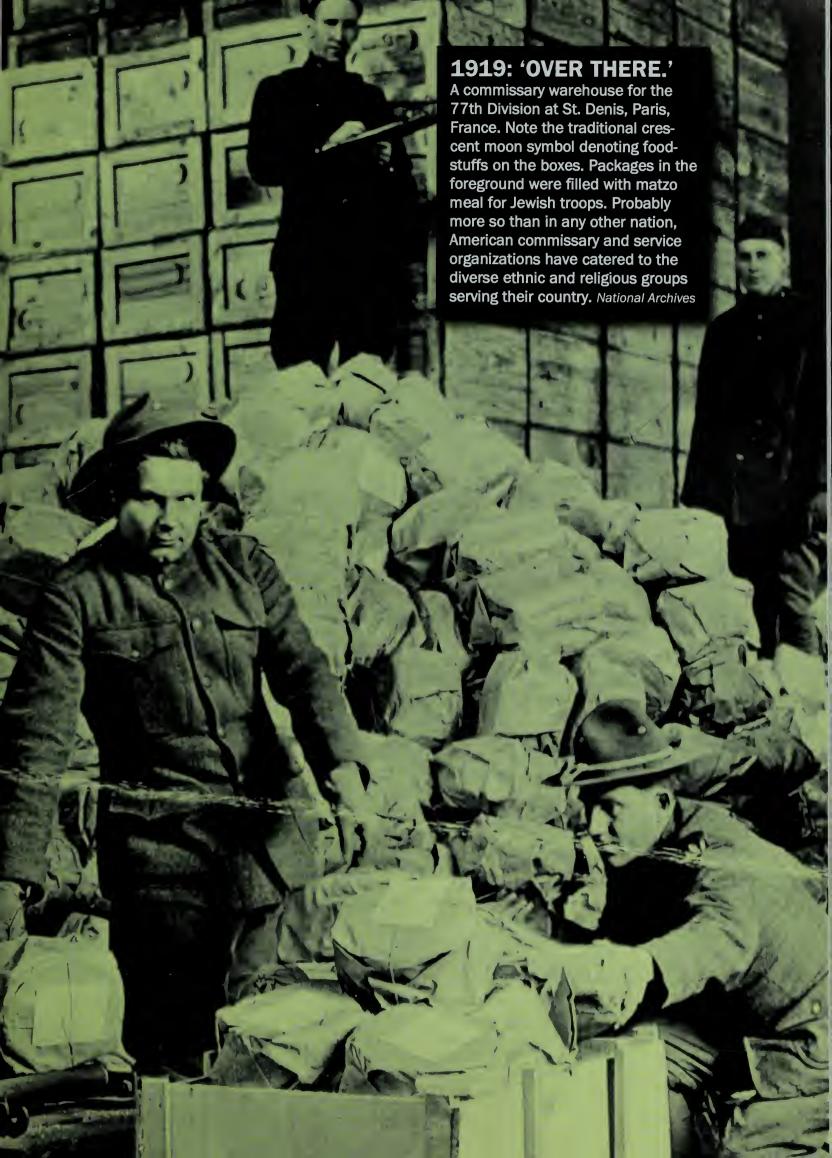


5

THE FIRST 1898 - 1919 OVERSEAS STORES

N APRIL 1898, THE UNITED STATES found itself at war with a foreign nation for the first time in fifty years. At the time, America had a modern, capable Navy that had always been the first line of defense. The Army, however, was tiny and had operated for decades with a minimal budget.

When the nineteenth century began, the Army's mission was to protect the native tribes and the frontier settlers from each other by enforcing the treaties and working with the Indian agents. As political pressures favoring westward expansion mounted, the Army had to establish frontier posts, guard roads and immigrant trails, control or subdue the native tribes, and garrison coastal defenses. These duties did not prepare the Army for an overseas conflict with a European nation, much less for a war that was waged in tropical forests.





EXPERIMENTAL RATIONS

During the war against Spain, the Army suffered from a lack of modern weapons, chaotic logistics, and faulty coordination with the Navy. As during the Civil War, the lack of preparedness extended to the rations. Although war had been brewing long before the USS *Maine* exploded in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898, the Army found itself unable to issue rations suited for tropical climates.

Certainly, there had been enough opportunities to have gotten it right. Special commissions had conducted experiments and surveys throughout the 1890s. They made some solid, common-sense recommendations for improving the rations, such as the addition of canned vegetable cakes. However, apparently no one on any of the commissions had considered what sort of rations might be needed for a different type of war in an entirely different climate. All the experimentation with the marching ration during the previous decade had been performed on the Great Plains under conditions wholly unlike what the men would later encounter in Cuba and the Philippines.

Few of the recommended improvements had actually been made by 1898, so even if radical changes had been suggested and approved, they almost certainly would never have been implemented in time for the war with Spain. At the start of hostilities, the Army's official daily ration looked woefully familiar: 20 ounces of beef, 1 pound of flour, 1 pound of potatoes, .04 ounce of black pepper, 0.6 ounce of salt, 2.4 ounces of sugar, 1.6 ounces of green unground coffee, .32 gill of vinegar, 2.5 ounces of dried beans, and .04 ounce of baking powder. This was similar to what soldiers had been eating throughout the nineteenth century.

THE 'EMBALMED BEEF' SCANDAL

Incredibly, some of the rations turned out to be even worse than before, mainly because they included a canned, boiled beef that had a strong, sickening smell. The canned meat had been stacked and left for days on the sunny, hot docks at Tampa, Florida, stored in the sweltering holds of ships, and piled outdoors in the sunsplashed beaches and steaming jungles of

Cuba. Due to this improper storage, much of the meat was spoiled, putrefied, and rancid. When opened, it had the terrible smell of rotting flesh, mixed with a distinct chemical odor, prompting the men to dub it "embalmed beef." They suspected the beef had been adulterated with preservatives and disinfectants.

Before sailing for Cuba, many soldiers were already suffering from poor food and terrible camp conditions. Entire regiments were stranded for days in Tampa, waiting to board transports. Disorganization was rampant.

Once aboard ship, some soldiers waited another week before the flotilla actually sailed. By then, the heat, the long wait, the constantly moving decks, and bad food had done their work. Hundreds of men—many of whom had never even *seen* an ocean before—were seasick before they ever got out of port. From that point on, the embalmed beef just made things worse.

The story about the beef that really caught the public's attention was the one told after the war by Col. Theodore Roosevelt, who had resigned his post as assistant secretary of the Navy in order to



ROOSEVELT and his famous Rough Riders first encountered the repulsive meat aboard ship on the way to Cuba. Nauseated, disgusted, and generally infuriated, Roosevelt ordered the entire batch tossed overboard. His postwar comment, "Less than a tenth of the meat shipped to Cuba was fit to eat," received widespread publicity.

help raise a regiment of cavalrymen for the war effort. Roosevelt and his famous Rough Riders first encountered the repulsive meat aboard ship, on the way to Cuba. Nauseated, disgusted, and generally infuriated, Roosevelt ordered the entire batch tossed overboard. His postwar comment, "Less than a tenth of the meat shipped to Cuba was fit to eat," received widespread publicity.

If ever an outspoken politician knew how to cultivate the press, it was the charismatic, straightforward, emotional Roosevelt. He was never one to mince words, and his every sentence seemed to generate a headline. He knew that if journalists were given an idea with which they could run, they would do the rest. Once they discovered that seven times as many Americans had died of sickness as had been killed in combat (only 345 Americans died of combat wounds, but 2,485 died of sickness), they charged that the bad meat contributed to that total by poisoning the men or causing other health problems. Soldiers who

refused to eat any of the putrid meat went hungry into battle; this decreased their usual energy and increased their chances of being killed.

Concern over the beef extended from Army mess tents to civilian dining room tables when the meat-packers soon came under congressional investigation after the war. The packers were vigorously attacked by Gen. Nelson A. Miles, the

commanding general of the Army, who testified his belief—supported by the soldiers' sense of smell—that the men had been given experimental meat products, both canned and frozen, laced with chemical antiseptics, preservatives, and disinfectants. With a little help from the newspapers, Miles and Roosevelt made "embalmed beef" a household term.

THE JUNGLE AND THE MEAT INSPECTION ACT

Commissary General Charles P. Eagan contended that Miles was wrong and implied that Miles was a liar. That stance cost Eagan his position, and he was censured for conduct unbecoming an officer. While none of Miles' allegations were ever proven, the public believed him. With or without chemicals, the meat had obviously been inedible. The packers' legal exoneration did nothing to boost their reputation. Public distrust lingered for years.

The furor was still fresh in everyone's memory when, in 1902, the publication of

Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* again focused attention on the meatpacking industry. Sinclair, wanting to inspire sympathy for the industry's employees, wrote about dangerous and unsanitary working conditions. However, the public became far more concerned with the state of the food on their own tables.

Readers were horrified by grotesque details of how ground meats, and sausages in particular, were contaminated and adulterated with everything from rat droppings and carcasses to severed human fingers.

Finally, eight years after the war with Spain, the combined effect of the embalmed beef scandal, the congressional investigations, and Sinclair's exposé helped inspire passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act in 1906. Today, the food industry owes many of its labeling practices, meat inspection standards, and new developments in packaging and marketing to these laws. At the time, though, Sinclair was reported to have remarked that he had "aimed for America's heart" but instead had "hit it in the stomach."

These events had a direct effect upon military commissary stores. The sensitivity over food quality, especially in a nation newly appreciative of its armed forces following the victory over Spain, helped ensure properly stocked commissaries in the United States.

It also encouraged their establishment overseas. A new, enlightened, and almost *trendy* appreciation of the wisdom of providing soldiers decent food prompted the opening of commissary sales stores at the new posts overseas.

FIRST OVERSEAS COMMISSARIES

Here, at least, the Army had some foresight. Three weeks before the declaration of war against Spain, the Army anticipated its future needs and established a grocery list for overseas sales stores. The list was put to use just a few months later, when U.S. forces occupied lands formerly owned by the Spanish.

The first of these U.S. overseas sales stores was established late in 1898 near Manila to support American troops sent to occupy the Philippine Islands. The store is supposed to have sold \$40,000 worth of groceries in its first year of operation, while charging only one-third to one-half the prices at local stores run by the private sector. That would mean a savings of 50 to 67 percent, which just may be the all-time record overall savings figure for any U.S. commissary anywhere.

Nationalist forces that had aided the



Gen. Nelson A. Miles

Americans against the Spanish were angered when it became clear that the U.S. military was going to stay in the Philippines for some time. Prolonged fighting during the resultant Philippine Insurrection brought thousands of American soldiers to the islands. The military needed sales stores to support these men. After the insurrection was contained, a large occupying force remained. By 1910, there were thirty-eight bases in the Philippines, most with a small sales commissary.

Significantly, especially in light of the embalmed beef scandal, a large cold storage plant was built near the Manila store to support commissaries in Philippines and in China. Completed in 1901, this plant played a key role in the United States' first experience with long overseas supply pipelines. Determined not to repeat the problems experienced during the war, the Army used the Manila facility to store foods aimed at maintaining the soldiers' health with a good, balanced diet. Fruit was included in the ration, and the secretary of war authorized the daily issue of ice to help preserve individual meat rations. All meat had to be shipped frozen, and when it arrived it was immediately placed in cold storage at the new facility.

CHINA, THE OPEN DOOR, AND OVERSEAS ADVENTURES

The most noteworthy of the commissaries supported by the plant was not in the Philippines at all. Rather, it opened in Peking, China, in 1900, after the defeat of the "Righteous, Harmonious Fists," a group of nationalist radicals who led a popular uprising against foreigners. Westerners simply called them "Boxers," and that's the way it's remembered in American history textbooks: the Boxer Rebellion. It was a nasty, bloody mess. Any foreigner (of either gender and any age) who was caught by the Boxers stood a good chance of being tortured, mutilated, and beheaded. The Boxers' siege of the foreign legations at Peking lasted fiftyfour days.

Ultimately, the Boxers were defeated by a relief force of British, Japanese, and American soldiers. This was an interesting alliance, considering that these nations would be involved in a war for control of the Western Pacific and all of East Asia just four decades later. For the present, the American forces occupying the capital, the China Relief Expedition, needed a commissary. By the end of the year they had one. Another opened at Tientsin.

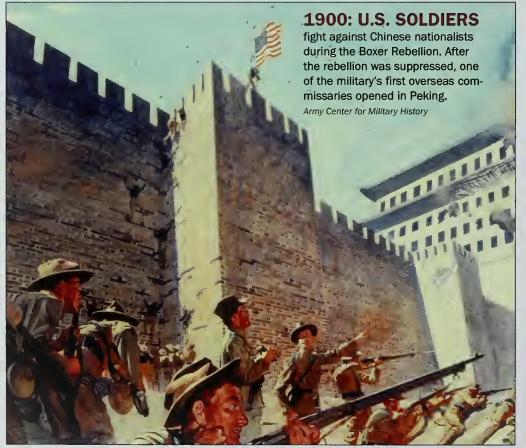
This was America's new age, the day of the Big Stick and the Open Door of colonialism and imperialism and overseas adventurism. Soon the United States had military bases and commissary sales stores in places that would have been unthinkable just a decade previously—not just the Philippines and China, but also Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. After the United States began building the Panama Canal in 1903, numerous stores opened in Panama and were open to both civilian canal construction workers and the Army. Soon the Navy would open their own stores as well.

ONE MAN'S VIEW: ARTHUR L. KOCH

Glimpses of these overseas turn-of-thecentury Army commissaries were recorded by Arthur L. Koch, who served as a commissary officer for many years and eventually reached the rank of colonel in the Quartermaster Corps.

Koch's memoirs say that the post commissary and regimental commissary—titles referring to *people*, not *buildings*—were positions that commanded some respect. In fact, by 1908, post commissary sergeants enjoyed the highest grade enlisted men could attain in the field. Koch, a candidate for such a position at the time, noted that if he was successful, "I would be a member of the post non-commissioned staff. I would *be* somebody, and rate separate quarters and additional privileges."

To achieve the eligible list, a candidate had to score 92 percent on a grueling exam. In 1910, the test took five days to complete. Koch scored well and became the commissary sergeant for Camp Wilhelm, a four-company scout post in Luzon. He later wrote, "In a small post, the commissary sergeant does practically all the [commissary and subsistence] work; therefore he gets the actual experience in every detail. I liked the work very much as it covered many figures in addition, fractions, and issues."





1901: PHILIPPINE ISLANDS. A commissary officer, seated fourth from left, and his staff pose in front of the Batangas store. The first overseas commissaries, located in the Philippines, set the trend for the future by employing local civilians—called "local nationals" in later years.

National Archives

SEGREGATION AND THE MILITARY

At that time, American noncommissioned officers and enlisted men were not allowed to associate with officers. The officer corps was still largely made up of a kind of American aristocracy in which the "lower classes" were unwelcome, at least in leisure or social situations. In civilian society, this elitist attitude discriminated against laborers, the middle class, recent immigrants, foreigners, and anybody who wasn't Caucasian; in the military, this meant anyone who wasn't an officer, and even certain officers—men from the middle or lower classes, foreigners, and, of course, any man who was not white.

This was the era of Jim Crow laws and outright segregation, given legal sanction by the Supreme Court's 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which established the precept of "separate but equal." As a result, racial segregation was perfectly legal as long as each group had its own "equal" railroad car, school, beach, water fountain, park bench, or whatever. The prevailing attitude, even among many of those who were being shunned for reasons of race,

ethnicity, or financial status, was that all persons should "know their place," and they should be happy that they had any place at all.

With Jim Crow being the law of the land, and "separate but equal" supplying apologists for segregation with a legal justification for their behavior, it's not surprising that segregationist attitudes would permeate the armed services as well. The services were simply an extension and a microcosm of the entire society. Segregationist attitudes also explained everything from the harassment of Henry Flipper decades earlier to the establishment of segregated shopping facilities in Panama.

There's no way of knowing what Koch and his Army buddies were thinking, but we do know that he and his fellow NCOs had far fewer apprehensions about associating with local nationals than some of their superior officers did. They spent much of their free time with the Filipinos who made up the scout companies. Together, the NCOs, Filipinos, and American civilian employees of the Quartermaster Corps played baseball and

sometimes went to dance halls. Their friendships helped ease tension between the two peoples, despite the attitudes of the officers, who were often patronizing and sometimes jingoistic, arrogant, and snobbish.

In September 1911, Koch was placed in charge of the commissary at Fort Santiago near Manila, where he was responsible for the depot's cold-storage facility. He handled the proper storage and shipment, by boat, ship, or rail, of frozen meats, butter, and fruit that were needed by the stores in the Philippines and the two stores in China. All the meat that came in was from Australia. Frozen meat arriving at the depot and again at the individual stores from the depot had to be unloaded immediately and stored properly, no matter the time of night or the weather conditions. This particular duty was the toughest part of a commissary sergeant's job.

Koch must have been remembering that job when, two years later, he said he was glad to become a cashier. Later, he recalled the cashier job "took all the time one man could devote, for there was a large immensely. It was free of much and was a real gentleman's job a posed to having to pitch in with the land bill or to place an entire shipment of manufacture and the middle of train-soaked night in Manila!"

TO THE SELECTION PANAMA

While Koch was playing baseball and building his commissary career in the Philippines, numerous commissaries were opening in Panama, where the United States began building the Panama Canal in 1903. For a while, within the Canal Zone (an area 10 miles wide and 50 miles long) a score of commissaries made up the highest concentration of such stores in the world.

The Panama stores were fundamentally different from those in the Philippines in a number of ways. First, many of the stores were run by the Panama Canal Commission, familiarly known as the PCC, and its railroad. The stores were opened by the PCC for the workers building the canal and their families. The customers included a tremendous number of people of varying backgrounds and skills. There were workers and families from the United States, Panama, and from all over the West Indies.

Second, the PCC stores sold hard goods (clothes, shoes and other supplies) as well as food. The great numbers of workers and families made it necessary for the PCC to provide them with places to shop for all their necessities.

The American military and their families could also shop at the PCC stores. In addition, each military community also had its own commissary. These were intended for the use of the military, and for American civilian employees of the military. Despite the presence of the trans-Panama railroad, it wasn't easy to get from one place to another within the Canal Zone—the terrain and rain forest saw to that. The earliest known military commissaries were located at Fort Bruja, Fort Amador, and France Field.

The PCC stores were far superior to those run by the military. At the time, the typical commissary was a scaled-down version of a civilian grocery, which was usually a general store or a neighborhood grocer. In contrast, PCC stores were large, ultramodern combinations of food markets and department stores. Store buyers frequently went to the United States to acquire large assortments of foods and hard goods. One, the PCC store at Balboa, was later described in an Army guidebook as "one of the largest and most complete stores in the world." That same guide barely mentioned the military stores, saying only, "the PX handles vegetables and the commissary handles meats."

Unfortunately, the large number of canal workers who were not Caucasian were victimized by segregation that was similar to what was occurring in the Philippines. In some respects it was actually worse. The Panamanians were friendly to the United States, unlike many Filipinos,

who had fought against American control of their country. Panama largely owed its independence to the United States' intercession with Colombia on its behalf. The Panamanians had agreed by treaty to lease the Canal Zone to the United States. Within that area, the laws and practices of the United States were enforced, so Panamanian workers experienced discrimination

as soon as they crossed the boundary from their nation into the Zone.

Americans of the time excused this discrimination because they believed the Panamanians and West Indians were better off earning decent wages in a segregated American system than they would have been if the Canal had not existed.

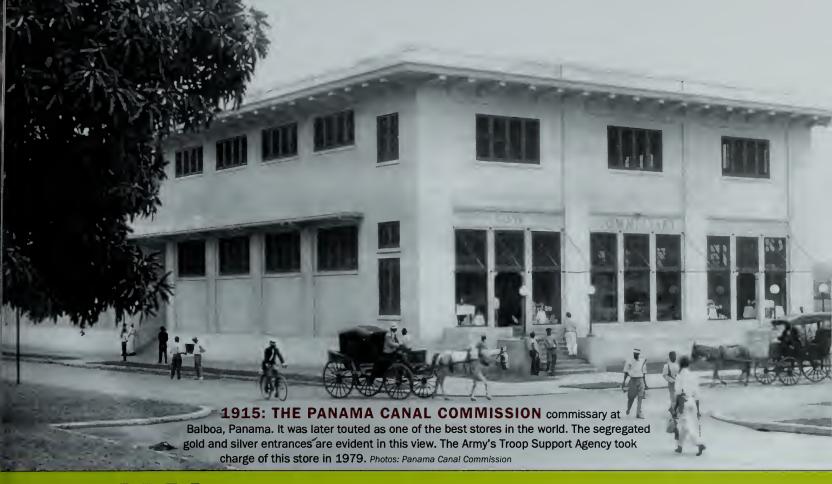
Few Panamanian and West Indian shoppers ever lodged formal complaints. Their wages were good and their standard of living was, indeed, far higher than it would have been had they worked elsewhere. They also knew that neither the military nor the PCC was obligated to provide them with anything at all; they weren't American citizens, so "separate but equal" didn't really apply to them—yet the PCC supplied them with both good wages and good places to spend



1911: GATUN, Panama. The PCC Store at Gatun on the banks of Gatun Lake, a man-made lake through which the Panama Canal passes. *Panama Canal Commission*



1911: INSIDE the PCC store at Gatun, Panama. Panama Canal Commission, courtesy of Dan Claffey



PANAMA: A Tale of Two Types of Commissaries

ROM 1904 TO 1979, THERE WERE TWO types of commissaries in Panama. The U.S. military's stores were open to active-duty military, their families, and American employees of the military. Those operated by the Panama Canal Commission (PCC) were primarily for canal workers and their families, but they were open to U.S. servicemen and their families, as well.

The military's earliest stores in Panama were located at Fort Amador, France Field (Coco Walk), and Fort Bruja (later known as Howard Air Force Base). Over the ensuing decades, so many commissaries opened at so many different locations that we still don't have a full picture of their scope. Fort DeLesseps, Fort Gulick (later called Fort Espinar), Fort Kobbe, Fort Sherman, Naval Air Station Coco Solo, and Naval Station Rodman. All had stores at one time or another, and there may also have been stores at Camps Elliott, Empire, Gaillard, and Otis, and Forts Grant and Brooke. A big store at Corozal served the military communities at Albrook Air Force Base and Fort Clayton for over fifty years. A central distribution center and cold-storage facility were located near the Corozal store. Of all these locations, only those at Corozal and Howard survived until 1999, when the United States turned the Canal over to Panama.

Besides the commissary at Balboa, PCC stores were located at Ancon, Cocoli, Cristobal, Culebra, Corundu [or Curundu], Darien, Diablo Heights, Gamboa, Gatun, Golden Green, LaBoca, Margarita/Rainbow City, Monte Lirio, Paraiso, Pedro Miguel, and Quarry Heights.

The PCC designated its stores as either gold or silver facilities, ostensibly indicating what type of money each would accept. Gold meant the store took payment only in gold coin, gold-backed scrip, or special coupons designated as "gold" coupons, while the other stores

would take only silver coin, scrip, or coupon. Large stores had gold and silver facilities, operating separately but under the same roof.

Unfortunately, these designations were a means of segregation. Only Caucasian Americans were paid in gold, while everyone else—Panamanians (of any race), West Indians, and African-Americans—were paid in silver. Non-Caucasians who went to the gold commissary bearing actual gold were turned away and directed to the nearest silver commissary.

No such segregation sullied the military stores, but African-American servicemen encountered it when shopping at PCC stores. When in 1979 the United States agreed to relinquish control of the canal in 1999, gold and silver commissaries finally went the way of the dinosaurs. Three of the PCC stores—Balboa, Coco Solo, and Corundu—were turned over to the military, while the rest were closed outright.



1906: CRISTOBAL. This commissary in Cristobal, Panama, belonged to the Panama Canal Commission. However, American servicemen could shop in this and other PCC stores.

them, with good stock lists and reason-

At the time, segregation was a fact of He For the Canal laborers to complain about it would have been unthinkable, especially since it probably would have cost them their jobs. The unfortunate rest of the story is that Americans viewed Central America and the Caribbean as an uncivilized backwater, whose people should be happy with whatever semblance of prosperity that came their way. That was pretty much the West's attitude prior to World War II. Attitudes slowly began to change only as colonial peoples began to make their dissatisfaction known.

In Panama, segregation would be especially long-lived. In fact, various forms of discrimination went on in Panama twenty years after the Supreme Court outlawed similar practices in the United States in the 1954 case of Brown v. Board of Education. That landmark case outlawed Jim Crow and began the slow process of desegregation in businesses, public schools, restaurants, public conveyances, professional baseball, neighborhoods, beaches, television commercials, a multitude of professions, and everything else in between.

It's not clear at what point the military ceased to make any distinctions for African-Americans in uniform shopping in the commissaries. Black and white troops had shared commissary facilities on the American frontier, though they probably shopped at different times. But photo evidence showed they shopped together in at least one wartime commissary in France in 1918. (See pages 92 and 93.)

THE NAVY'S FIRST STORES

Meanwhile, the Navy was at last establishing its own commissary stores. At the turn of the century, the Navy and Marines had ships' canteens but had not established any sales commissaries, exchanges, or ships' stores. Maybe it was the spirit of a new century, or just the impracticality of doing things the old way, but things were about to change.

The Navy had acquitted itself spectacularly in 1898 during the Spanish-American War. First in the Battle of Manila Bay, then again in a running battle down the south coast of Cuba outside Santiago harbor, the Navy annihilated the Spanish ships. At Manila, the battle had been so one-sided that the American fleet actually paused for breakfast in the middle of the hostilities.*

The Navy soon found itself patrolling new American possessions in the Pacific and the Caribbean. In 1901, Theodore Roosevelt, who became president, took great pride and interest in the Navy. His interventionist (some would say imperialist) policies necessitated the Navy's contining modernization. Within a few years, the Navy had become such a symbol of America's new-found power and prestige that Roosevelt decided to show it off to the world on a "goodwill" tour that was really more like a coming-out party.

In December 1907, sixteen steel battleships sailed out of Hampton Roads, Virginia, beginning a round-the-world cruise that would show the world the naval might of the United States. Though officially this was a friendly cruise, most people in the United States, as well as abroad, realized it personified Roosevelt's Big Stick policy. The ships, nonetheless, were painted peacetime white, and became known as the Great White Fleet.

This famous voyage led directly to the establishment of Navy and Marine Corps sales commissaries. More than twelve thousand men participated in the voyage, spending fifteen months at sea. Several "stores ships" accompanied the fleet. Two were refrigerated, and like similar ships today, they were known as "reefers." One was named, appropriately, the USS Glacier, and the other was the USS Culgoa. Still, despite the presence of these support ships, it's surprising the men didn't have health problems caused by their diets. Their meals, prepared in ships' galleys, were largely the traditional Navy fare, lacking in variety and basic nutrients: potatoes, salted meats, and the Navy bean. Usually, supplementing this diet with tastier, healthier fare was the job of the bumboats.

When the ships reached port, local merchants rushed out in every conceivable type of small boat—rowboats, sampans, dhows, junks, small scows, skiffs, canoes of all types (bark, dugout, outrigger, animal hide), kayaks, catamarans, gondolas, native vintas and coracles (made of reeds), and actual tubs. Collectively, these were the bumboats. The merchants on these boats sold canned food, baked goods, fresh fruits, vegetables, eggs, and candy-anything the ships' stores didn't carry. The sailors, wanting anything other than the usual rations, paid high prices for these items.

This was how the world's sailors had always acquired goods other than rations, and though this system was better than nothing, it now proved inadequate. During the voyage of the Great White Fleet, the Navy discovered bumboats couldn't be relied upon to provide all the sales goods the sailors of a large, modern fleet wanted. If nothing else, the bigger ships and the large crews they carried made bumboats impractical. Transactions once carried out by a few dozen men could not be provided for a fleet with hundreds of men on every ship.** The Navy concluded the men should not be dependent upon services provided by foreign merchants whose main motive was profit, and who could not necessarily be counted upon in times of war. What was needed was a modern system of ships' sales stores afloat and ashore.

While the fleet was still at sea, the Naval Appropriations Act of May 13, 1908, authorized the sale of subsistence items in on-shore subsistence stores similar to those operated by the Army. First known as subsistence stores and later as ships stores ashore, they were called commissaries as early as 1920, but were not officially designated Navy commissaries until 1950. Meanwhile, early Navy exchanges were called ships' service stores, while ships' stores afloat were small-scale combinations of exchanges and commissaries, crammed wherever there was room aboard ship.

^{* —} The American flagship at Manila Bay had been none other than the Olympia (See page 91 for a photo), the first ship to carry refrigeration equipment.

^{🗱 —} Bumboat men and women were seldom permitted on board; usually only those in a ship's home port were welcome on deck.



In March 1909, the fleet had parely been home two weeks when Congress provided funds for Navy and Marine Corps ships' tures ashore—that is, commissaries—as well as ships' stores afloat. The commissaries' official purpose was "to sell, at the lowest possible prices, articles to enlisted personnel for their comfort and contentment." The Navy was to

"provide a convenient and reliable source from which authorized patrons may obtain groceries, meat and produce and other authorized items at the lowest practicable cost."

In July, the Navy officially established ships' stores. The order listed the articles that could be sold and placed a limit on the available inventory. In 1910, the first Navy commissary opened at the Washington (D.C.) Navy Yard. Others soon opened in Norfolk, Newport, and San Francisco.

The appropriations act specified operational procedures. Navy commissaries, like those of the Army, were to operate strictly on a not-for-profit basis. Commissary store profits were regulated to limit the accumulated fund to the amount involved in equipping and operating the stores. In 1910, this meant profits were limited to 15 percent.

The merchandise assortment in stores afloat was very small; at first some of the stores ashore weren't stocked much better. But they were better than nothing at all.

MAJOR REORGANIZATION

In 1912, Congress merged the Army's Subsistence and Pay Departments with the Quartermaster's Department and placed them under the control of the chief of the Quartermaster Corps of the Army. For half a century, the Quartermaster Corps ran the Army's commissaries, a job it did not relinquish until July 1962.

The Quartermaster Corps traditionally had furnished transportation, clothing, and equipment and had responsibility for national cemeteries and the construction and repair of quarters and transportation facilities. Now it added the duties of pay and other fiscal matters, responsibility for overseas cemeteries in wartime, feeding the

THE [NAVY] COMMISSARIES' official purpose was "to sell, at the lowest possible prices, articles to enlisted personnel for their comfort and contentment." The Navy was to "provide a convenient and reliable source from which authorized patrons may obtain groceries, meat and produce and other authorized items at the lowest practicable cost." — Congress, March 1909

Army, as well as the old Subsistence Department commissary sales stores.

PRE-WAR CONUS STORES: MILITARY AND CIVILIAN

The small post commissary at Benicia, California, was probably typical of stores located in the United States at that time. It was open for sales only ninety minutes daily; the balance of the day was devoted to quartermaster and ordnance routine. The place also had a post garden for fresh vegetables served in the mess halls.

During the prewar years, civilian stores were changing, leaving commissaries behind. In 1914, a family by the name of Gerrard introduced partial self-service to California, and in 1916 the Piggly Wiggly in Memphis, Tennessee, became the self-proclaimed "world's first completely self-service grocery store." It was conceived and operated by 35-year-old Clarence Saunders, who had started in the grocery business as a 14-year-old clerk working for \$2 per day.

The store featured four aisles, shelves crammed with 605 different food items, wooden hand-held grocery baskets, two turnstiles for entering and exiting, and a single cashier's cage. It also had a wooden railing that compelled customers to walk around the entire store, thus prompting higher sales. The average transaction was, initially, 96 cents.

The grocery chains did not originate supermarkets—Saunders did. His Piggly Wiggly concept was the first true predecessor and the catalyst of the modern supermarket. Established grocery chains such as Kroger, Safeway, National Tea, and Colonial purchased Piggly Wiggly franchises from Saunders and operated them under the Piggly Wiggly name before converting

their own stores to the new concept. At that time, military commissaries had not yet converted to self-service operations, nor were they as customer-friendly as stores in the civilian sector.

PATRON BASE EXPANDS

The military patron base gradually expanded in the early twentieth century. In 1911, Congress

extended the commissary privilege to officials of the federal government who were located at or near Army posts. In 1914, and again in 1916, Congress guaranteed that enlisted men, regardless of their service affiliation, would be charged the same prices at any given military commissary store. This seems logical today, but at the time there was an astounding amount of interservice rivalry and parochialism. If the services had continued to go their separate ways, practices may have been so different as to make ultimate consolidation (in the form of today's Defense Commissary Agency) difficult, if not impossible, without major legislative changes.

In 1916, Army regulations, apparently for the first time, permitted the sale of commissary supplies to retired enlisted personnel. This came thirty-seven years after the privilege had been granted to retired officers.

AMERICAN PARTICIPATION IN WORLD WAR I

When the United States entered World War I, the Quartermaster Corps had only four types of field units: bakery, truck, pack, and wagon companies. The Quartermaster Corps was able to adapt to the new dimensions of warfare largely through the efforts of the chief quartermaster general, Brig. Gen. Harry L. Rogers.

Gen. John J. Pershing, head of the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe, established the Services of Supply to support his field armies. A general purchasing board came under the direction of Brig. Gen. Charles G. Dawes. It was intended to eliminate competition between services and allied nations for supplies, but it did not control quantity or quality of supplies.



By July 1918, over a million U.S. soldiers were in Europe. American newspapers were proclaiming their soldiers to be the best fed troops on earth, and, despite all the problems experienced over the years, this was probably an accurate statement. Other armies lagged behind even the worst of U.S. rations and troop-feeding procedures.

WARTIME RATIONS

The American wartime rations were finally much improved. Years before, Congress had given President William McKinley free rein in setting up a new, improved ration system, including the authority to prescribe the kinds and quantities of the components of the ration. When Theodore Roosevelt, the old Rough Rider, became president after McKinley's assassination in 1901, he took special interest in the ration; that was to be expected, after his firsthand experience with embalmed beef. The result was five rations for five different situations: garrison, emergency, field, travel, and combat rations.

Unfortunately, during World War I, the combat ration developed prior to the war proved to be insufficient. In front-line trenches, cooking was impractical and spoilage due to poison gas or dampness was a distinct possibility. A new "special reserve" or "trench" ration, weighing 107 pounds and designed to subsist twenty-five men for one day, was hermetically sealed in galvanized iron containers to protect

against gas contamination.

A new wartime daily reserve ration consisted of 20 ounces beef (corned, fresh, or hash), or an equivalent amount of salmon or sardines; .15 gill vinegar; 2.4 ounces dried beans; .64 ounce lard; 2.4 ounces sugar, .06 ounce baking powder; 1.3 ounces prunes; .04 ounce black pepper; .014 ounce cinnamon; .32 gill syrup; .014 ounce lemon flavoring; .5 ounce evaporated milk; 1.2 ounces ground coffee; 1 pound flour. In other words, it still left much to be desired.

Concepts developed earlier were also put into practice. One was the rolling kitchen or the field kitchen (known to the troops as the "bean gun" because its stovepipe resembled a cannon). Other innovations included reliable refrigeration; dehydrated vegetables; the use of deboned, rather than carcass, beef; the creation of an official Garden Service to contribute fresh vegetables to the men; and the increased use of instant coffee. When the subsistence system couldn't get luxury supplies to troops, numerous civilian organizations came through by sponsoring canteens.

WARTIME STORES OVERSEAS: 'ROLLING' AND UNROLLING

To reach men near the front lines, trucks used as "rolling sales stores" operated from the division sales commissary and went to the front lines to supply the men with articles which they could not otherwise have obtained: canned goods, pipes, tobacco,

and cigarettes. These rolling stores were the World War I predecessors of modern mobile tactical field exchanges.

Fixed location commissaries were set up in whatever structures were available, from downtown Paris to forward staging areas: shacks, buildings half-blown away, and hospitals were among the facilities used. These commissaries had one thing in common: There was no self-service. One store in Paris had six lines with six French clerks ready to take men's orders. Three of these lines were for officers only. Other stores featured one line, in which the customer submitted his list, paid the bill, and picked up his goods after they were pulled from the shelf. Men were admonished to "Make it Snappy!" so as to not keep their pals waiting in line behind them. One store had a sign that said, "Do Not Spit on the Floor," reminding troops that this particular habit contributed to the spread of tuberculosis.

These overseas stores had limited stock lists. But back home in Hampton Roads, Virginia, the naval base commissary store had 645 line items—eight times as many as the Army's original stores fifty years previously.

ORGANIZING, REORGANIZING

In 1917, an executive order created the Food Administration, which coordinated food production, transport, allocation to the armed services and our allies, and voluntary rationing efforts. Voluntary

containing was known as "Hooverizing," in honor of the head of the containstration, future President Herbert Hoover. The subsistence divided of the Quartermaster Corps would later act "in subordination to end in close cooperation with" this agency. The same year, the Food Furchase Board was organized to coordinate all purchases of food products intended for military purposes. The board was formed at Hoover's suggestion, with the approval of the service secretaries.

When 1918 arrived, so did the establishment of a subsistence division within the Office of the Quartermaster General. Its goal was to provide centralized control with decentralized purchase, and its duties touched everything connected with food supply. Later in the year came the garden service branch of the supplies division in the Quartermaster's Office. It was run by 157 officers on 3,000 acres in France, where it produced ten million pounds of vegetables between February and November at one-third the cost of the prevailing market price.

The Quartermaster Corps learned many new things about the eating habits of American soldiers during World War I, and about the ability of the Army to feed them. For example, canned tomatoes were especially valued by the men—just as they had been on the Great Plains and during the Civil War. The American soldier also enjoyed candy, tobacco, and chewing gum. His Thanksgiving dinner in 1918 was a particularly festive occasion, as it took place two weeks after the Armistice. It was definitely the holiday meal of a victorious army, with beef, turkey, and all the trimmings served in the field on the soldiers' tin plates.

THE TOBACCO RATION

Smoking and chewing tobacco had been popular among white and black Americans since early colonial times, and among Native Americans before that. It was as much a tradition as it was a business or a habit. It had long been a best-seller for sutlers, and the Navy had provided plugs of the stuff to its sailors since the mid-nineteenth century. Pipes and cigars had been popular in all the services; now, in the early twentieth century, cigarettes were beginning to gain acceptance. It was no surprise when in May 1918, President Woodrow Wilson authorized a tobacco ration for soldiers serving overseas.

According to the 1918 Report of the Quartermaster General, this ration was authorized because it was deemed "almost a necessity for the welfare of the men serving there [overseas]." Statistics said that more than 95 percent of the Americans overseas used tobacco in some form. The quartermaster decided to furnish tobacco as part of the soldiers' ration, and it was available at cost in the commissaries.

The tobacco habit gained broad acceptance during and after the war, with millions of people unknowingly jeopardizing their health. Today the origins of a nationwide addiction are obvious. The QMG Report stated [emphasis added]:

"Tobacco has established its claim to a recognized place in the soldier's life. Statistics show that 95 percent of the American Expeditionary Forces use it in one form or another. It is now a regular part of the soldier's daily ration ... tobacco has come to be considered a necessity for men in active service. To men enduring physical hardships, obliged to live without the comforts and often even the necessities of life in times of battle, *tobacco fills a need nothing else can satisfy.*







The daily ration of four-tenths ounces is now given to every man overseas who desires it. The soldier has the choice of cigarettes, smoking or chewing tobacco. If he chooses smoking tobacco he is given cigarette papers with it. This is Uncle Sam's contribution ... Abundant supplies of tobacco are on hand in the commissaries overseas and the soldier can buy it at actual cost. [This is one of the first mentions of tobacco in the commissaries.] There is no profit or tax added on any tobacco shipped to France and it is sold to the troops at a lower cost than the biggest wholesaler can purchase it in the United States."

During the war, the subsistence division shipped a monthly average of 20 million cigars and 25 million cigarettes overseas. The tobacco ration consisted of a daily allotment per man of 0.4 ounce smoking tobacco, 0.4 ounce chewing tobacco, or four cigarettes. Men receiving smoking tobacco also received a one-tenth book of cigarette papers for "rolling their own." Since each book contained a hundred sheets, the recipient could either stretch his tobacco allotment to ten self-rolled cigarettes, or simply keep any extra sheets in reserve.

Thus began the long tradition of issuing the men tobacco, rather than forcing them to purchase it. They could either smoke it themselves or use it for barter. This was also the beginning of respectability, and profitability, for cigarettes, which hadn't yet been accepted by polite society. They hadn't been accepted by front-line commanders, either. Lit cigarettes gave enemy snipers nighttime targets, and the smell of burning tobacco could reveal troop positions. But trying to stop the men from smoking was like trying to stop an incoming tide.

The war years, as well as the discouraging aftermath in 1919-1920 and the wild Twenties that followed, were times when ordinary people flouted convention and flew in the face of wisdom, authority, and common sense. They were perfect years for cigarettes to become popular.

What began as a ration shortly became booming business as the troops returned home, still wanting to smoke. If they were in uniform, there was no problem; tobacco continued to be distributed free to the troops after the war. But discharged soldiers and sailors had to pay—and they did.

POSTWAR

In August and September 1919, the War Department sold \$12 million in war surplus, including subsistence items, through post office outlets. Afterwards, the War Department continued selling surplus through a system of Army resale surplus stores open to the public. At first there were twenty-six stores, but they soon increased to seventy-seven, selling \$35 million worth of goods, 75 percent of

which was subsistence. These sales ended in June 1920.

A CO-OP STORE

Eleven months after the Armistice the Navy authorized the inspectors of ordnance at the Naval Proving Grounds at Dahlgren, Virginia, and Indian Head, Maryland, to each use a building on government property to establish an employees' co-operative store.

Little is known about the Indian Head store. It probably was similar to the Dahlgren facility, which later became known as the "Community Restaurant and Commissary" and later still as the Dahlgren commissary. It was actually a co-operative, but it filled much the same function as a government-run commissary. Goods were sold at cost, plus enough of a profit margin to pay for expenses.

The main difference between the co-ops and actual Navy commissaries was that civilians housed at the base could purchase goods at the co-ops. The documentation on the Dahlgren store makes it clear that by 1919, and certainly by the 1930s, this sort of arrangement was the exception. Still, these stores were probably common at the time, especially at remote Navy bases and at isolated Army posts. In less remote areas, traditional commissaries still prevailed.

CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS

FEB 15, 1898

1898

U.S. *Military History:* The USS *Maine* exploded in Havana Harbor. To this day there is controversy as to what exactly happened to the *Maine*. However, at the time, popular sentiment and American newspapers linked the explosion to Spain.

APRIL 9, 1898

IN ANTICIPATION of a war with Spain, an overseas grocery list was established for sales commissaries. (Hucles, *Haversack*, pp. 71, 135; *Annual Report to the Secretary of War 1898*, pp. 10-11)

APRIL 24 -DEC. 10, 1898 U.S. Military History: Spanish-American War. U.S. naval forces scored decisive victories over their Spanish counterparts near Cuba and the Philippines. The victories at sea paved the way for similar success on land, ended Spain's colonial empire, and launched America into a position of being a world power. During the war, America suffered 4,108 casualties: 385 combat deaths, 2,061 deaths to other causes and 1,662 wounded.

MAY 1, 1898

U.S. Military History: Battle of Manila Bay initiated the American presence in the Philippines. Commodore (later Admiral) George Dewey, aboard his flagship, the cruiser USS Olympia, led the American Asiatic Squadron against the Spanish fleet. As the battle began, Dewey gave his famous order to the Olympia's captain, Charles Gridley: "You may fire when you are ready, Gridley."

Every Spanish vessel was sunk and only one



1900: DEPLOYED IN CHINA. U.S. troops in Peking, China, after the Boxer Rebellion. Their refreshments probably came from the local commissary—one of the first two stores established overseas. *National Archives*

American sailor was wounded. Gridley, already ill when the battle began, took a turn for the worse shortly afterwards, and within a few weeks died in a hospital in Japan. Meanwhile, Dewey gave Filipino insurgent **Emiliano Aguinaldo** the impression that the Philippines would be liberated after the war. When this didn't happen, Aguinaldo led his forces against the Americans.

SUMMER 1898

THE INFAMOUS "embalmed beef" scandal.

U.S. troops in Cuba were issued rations that included both frozen and canned meat, thought to have been laced with preservatives and antiseptics. Due to improper storage in the heat—first in Florida, next in the holds of transport ships, and then again in Cuba—much of the canned meat was putrefied, rancid, and had a strong chemical smell.

During the Spanish-American War, eight times more men died of sickness than of combat wounds. Allegations were made that the bad meat had contributed to the total by allowing men to grow weak and susceptible to disease. These allegations helped inspire governmental controls on the meat industry. (Dickson, *Chow*, pp. 26-28)

AUGUST 1898

New Food Product: Pepsi-Cola hit the market. (Elkort, *Food*, p. 28)

1899

1899

DRIED FRUITS became an authorized part of the ration, though not in great quantities: 12.5 pounds of them per every hundred rations.

FEB. 4, 1899 -MAY 23, 1901 U.S. Military History: Philippine Insurrection.

This conflict, seldom remembered and not usually listed among the United States' major wars, cost the United States many more lives than had the Spanish-American War.

MARCH 2, 1899

CONGRESS authorized a commissary officer and commissary sergeant for each regiment of cavalry and infantry. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 134)

MAY 9, 1899

1900

THE SECRETARY of war authorized issue of ice to troops stationed on islands to help preserve their meat ration. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 134)

1900

THE FIRST true overseas commissary sales

store opened at Manila, Philippine Islands. This was the first of many commissaries in the Philippines. A nearby cold-storage facility would help support not only the Philippine stores, but also the stores established in China after the Boxer Rebellion. Placed near Manila to support U.S. troops sent to occupy the islands, the store sold \$40,000 worth of groceries in its first year of operation, while charging only one-third to one-half the price of commercial stores. (Military Market, Oct 1961, pp. 27-28; Secretary of War, Annual Reports, 1901, Vol. I, Part 2, pp. 435, 446, 458, and 1902, Vol. I, pp. 536-49. The latter includes a sales list for the Manila store.)

Military Technology: Invention of the rigid dirigible airship in Germany. The man responsible, Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin, had been inspired from watching the Union Army's observation balloons during the U.S. Civil War.

New Food Products: Tradition has it that food vendor Harry Stevens put a frankfurter sausage on a bun during a Giants baseball game at the Polo Grounds in New York City, giving the fans something to eat with their Cokes, Moxies, Dr. Peppers, and Pepsis. This was the birth of the hot dog, though it didn't pick up that name for several more years; it was initially called the "Red Hot." It became the hot dog because it originally was a German sausage and was generally shaped like a German dachshund. (Elkort, Food, p. 29)

Another version of the story says Stevens did not come up with his gimmick until 1906, and credits the whole origin of the hot dog to the Frankfurter marketed by Antoine Feucht-vaunger, a German immigrant (from Frankfurt, of course) who lived in St. Louis ... another great baseball town. Campbell's soups, invented several years earlier, began sporting their traditional red and white labels—the school colors of Cornell University. (Progressive Grocer, May 1999, p. 25)

MAY -AUGUST 1900

1900

1900

U.S. Military History: The United States sent soldiers, Marines and sailors to China to join an allied effort to suppress the rebellion of the Chinese "Righteous, Harmonious Fists."

This group of nationalist radicals, commonly known in the West as "Boxers," led an uprising against foreigners. The China Relief Expedition helped break the Boxers' fifty-four-day siege of the foreign legations at Peking, and ended the Boxer Rebellion.

1900 - 1903

SOMETIME AFTER the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion, a sales commissary was established in Peking to serve the large U.S. troop contingent in the city. It was probably located in the foreign legation sector where the siege had taken place. Another store was opened at Tientsin.

1901

1901

THE ARMY BUILT a large cold-storage plant in Manila, part of the supply depot that would support all U.S. posts in the Philippines and China. (Arthur L. Koch, *A Story About a Soldier*; p. 74)

FEB. 2, 1901

CONGRESS GAVE the president free rein in setting up a new, improved ration system, including the authority to prescribe the kinds and quantities of the components of the ration. (U.S. Congress, *Act of 2 Feb 1901*, Section 40, 31 Stat. 758)

Five rations were created for five different situations: garrison, emergency, field, travel, and combat. Sale of beer, wine, and other liquors and spirits was prohibited in post exchanges, canteens, and on Army transports. (Dickson, *Chow*, pp. 28-29; *Operational Rations*, p. 6; Vice Adm. George C. Dyer, USN (Ret), *Naval Logistics*, II-4; 10 U.S. Code 724; Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 134)

SEPT. 6, 1901

was shot by Leon Czolgosz, an anarchist, in Buffalo, New York. McKinley died of his wounds on September 14. Vice President Theodore Roosevelt was sworn in as the twenty-sixth U.S. president.

1902

1902

New Food Product & Food Business: Jell-O was introduced during what was perhaps the first nationwide food advertising campaign. (Elkort, Food, p. 29)

1902

Food Business: Upton Sinclair published *The Jungle*, a novelized exposé of the Chicago meatpacking industry.

1903

1903

U.S. Military History: After much bickering and infighting among high-ranking army officers, including Commanding General Nelson Miles and former Commanding General John Schofield, Congress approved legislation that created a small general staff and the office of the Chief of Staff. This abolished the position of commanding general as of the moment of Miles'





1908: BUMBOATS approach the Great White Fleet in Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka). *U.S. Navy*

resignation, which took place later that year. Other proposed changes included combining the Pay, Quartermaster, and Commissary Departments (see entry for 1912).

MARCH 2, 1903

CONGRESS appropriated funds to be used for the construction, equipment, and maintenance of suitable buildings at military posts and stations for the conduct of **post exchange activities**. (*Hearings*, Special Subcommittee, 1949, p. 3473; also see 32 Stat. 927, 2 Mar 1903)

NOVEMBER 1903

World Events: The American Cruiser USS Nashville arrived in Colon, Panama, to support a mostly bloodless revolution that resulted in Panama's indepdence from Colombia.

DEC. 17, 1903

Technology: The **Wright Brothers** made their first four sustained flights of a heavier-than-air, motor-powered aircraft at Kill Devil Hill near **Kitty Hawk**, North Carolina.

1904

1904 New F

New Food Product: Introduction of **Canada Dry** ginger ale.

1905

1905

HENRY G. Sharpe became the commissary general of subsistence. The same year, he established the first **Cooks and Bakers School** at Fort Riley, Kansas. (Dickson, *Chon*; p. 29)

FEB. 15, 1905

IN PANAMA, a system of commissaries previously established by the Panama Railroad and the French canal-building effort transferred, briefly, to the Isthmian Canal Commission (later known as the Panama Canal Commission). The ICC gave

the commissaries back to the railroad two and onehalf months later. ("Cash Sales to Start in Ancon Commissary," *Panama Canal Review*, 2 Feb 1951)

AUGUST 1905

A COUPON SYSTEM was adopted for use instead of cash in the commissaries run by the Panama Railroad. This system remained in the PCC/PRR stores until 1951-52. ("Cash Sales to Start in Ancon Commissary," *Panama Canal Review*, 2 Feb 1951)

1906

1906 - 1909

IN TYPICAL "Big Stick" style, Marines occupied parts of Cuba during a period of political and social unrest.

JUNE 30, 1906

Food & Politics: Passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act. The embalmed beef scandal and Upton Sinclair's The Jungle (published in 1902) were the two factors primarily responsible for the acts' passage.

1907

DEC. 16, 1907

SAILING FROM Norfolk, Virginia, sixteen steel battleships, accompanied by several support vessels, began a 'round-the-world cruise. Officially, the cruise was a goodwill tour, but, in fact, it fit in very nicely with President Theodore Roosevelt's "Big Stick" policy by showing the world the naval might of the United States. The ships, painted peacetime white, were known as the Great White Fleet. The voyage also proved the inadequacy of the bumboat system and the Navy's can-



1909: A COMMISSARY storehouse at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. It included offices and may have housed a sales area as well. Frontier Army Museum photo, courtesy Lt. Col. Doug Friedly



teens, leading directly to the establishment of Navy and Marine Corps commissary sales stores shortly after the fleet's return.

While the fleet was gone, the Naval Appropriations Act of May 13, 1908, authorized the sale of subsistence items in onshore subsistence stores similar to those operated by the Army. [see March 3, 1909] (Nathan Miller, The U.S. Navy: An Illustrated History, pp. 230-40; "Statement of the Armed Forces on the Operation of Commissaries," pp. 2-3, in binder, General Feldman Presentation Before Armed Forces Investigating Committee, 27 Jun 1949, DeCA historical file)

1908

GENERAL ORDER No. 46 established the new Army ration. (War Department *Annual Reports*, 1918: Report of the Quartermaster General, p. 303; G.O. No. 46, 1908)

THE NAVAL Appropriations Act of May 13, 1908, authorized the sale of subsistence items in onshore stores similar to those operated by the Army: "That such stores as the Secretary of the Navy may designate may be procured and sold to officers and enlisted men of the Navy and Marine Corps, also to civilian employees and at naval stations beyond continental limits of the United States and Alaska, under such regulations as the

Secretary of the Navy may prescribe."

Under the provisions of this act the sale of supplies, chiefly provisions, would be authorized at the Washington, D.C., bases at Navy Yard, Norfolk, Newport, and the Naval Training Station, San Francisco. In September 1908, the Navy directed the bureau of supplies and accounts to submit a draft of tentative regulations for approval of the Navy secretary and to report action taken to carry the act into effect. ("Statement on the Operation of Commissaries," pp. 2-3, in binder, General Feldman Presentation, 1949)

SEPTEMBER -OCTOBER 1908 **POST COMMISSARY** sergeants enjoyed the highest grade an enlisted man could attain. To achieve such a position, one had to pass an examination—much of it oral. (Koch, *Story*, p. 60)

1909

FEB. 22, 1909

THE GREAT White Fleet returned to Norfolk. (Miller, *U.S. Navy*, pp. 230-40)

MARCH 3, 1909

CONGRESS established Navy and Marine Corps commissaries and ships' stores. On this date, the Naval Appropriations Act of 1909 implemented the action of the previous May 13 providing for Navy ships' stores and commissaries and Marine Corps commissaries, making it permanent through the simple but effective use of the word "hereafter."

1908

MAY 13, 1908

("Statement on the Operation of Commissaries," pp. 2-3, in binder, General Fedlmen Presentation, 1949; Hearings, p. 412; 1975 HR Report, Information on Commissary Store Operations, p. 2; Navy Resale System Annual Review, 1985; Navy Resale System, p. 1; NEX-COM, 50 Years, pp. 2-3)

There is confusion on these dates; Operational Alternatives, p. 89 [an 1975 OMB Commissary and Exchange Study] says 1910; this probably reflects confusion with fiscal 1910, appropriations for which were passed in 1909; Navy Commissary Program and NEXCOM's 50 Years of Serving You cite the "Naval Appropriations Act of 3 March 1909," and this is almost certainly correct. (This is 35 Stat. 768, USC title 34, sec. 533)

JULY 1, 1909

THE NAVY established ships' stores—including stores ashore and afloat—that would later be called ships' stores, exchanges, and commissaries. The general order listed the articles which could be sold and limited the inventory. (NRS News Digest, Apr 1976, p. 3; NEXCOM, 50 Years, p. 3)

AUGUST 1909

NAVAL DEPARTMENT General Order No. 76 amplified the rules and regulations of ships' stores and commissaries. Their purpose was defined as "the purchase, at the lowest possible prices, and the sale at a reasonable cost to enlisted personnel of articles necessary for their comfort and contentment." (NRS News Digest, Apr 1976, p. 3)

AUG. 11, 1909

WAR DEPARTMENT General Order No. 172 expanded the sales lists for the Army's stateside stores. (War Department, G.O. No. 172, 11 Aug 1909)

1909 - 1910

THE MARINE CORPS established its first sales commissary during this time frame. The 1909 date is probably incorrect and reflects the passage of the 1909 Navy Appropriations Act. The first Marine commissary, whose location has not yet been ascertained, was probably opened in 1910. (Hearings, 412; 1975 HR Report, Information on Commissary Store Operations, p. 2)

1910

THE FIRST NAVY commissary opened at the Washington (D.C.) Navy Yard. (1975 HR Report, Information on Commissary Store Operations, p. 2; Hearings, p. 412; Navy Commissary Program, pp. 1, 9)

1910

GENERAL ORDER No. 138 allowed exchanges to collect debt directly from a soldier's pay. This

continued until 1925. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 134)

1910

THE EXAMINATION for the position of post commissary sergeant now lasted five days. (Koch, Story, p. 65)

MAY 1910

THE FIRST OFFICIAL field testing of the new Holbrook-Dunn field oven took place during a competition held in Nashville, Tennessee, by the Cooks and Bakers School. This oven had been invented by Capt. Lucius Holbrook and Regimental Commissary Sgt. Patrick Dunn, both of the 5th Cavalry at Fort Riley, Kansas.

The oven, adopted for Army use, was a big improvement over the old-style Dutch ovens, which one man described as "man killers" because of the amount of work involved in their operation. The new ovens were capable of turning out fresh bread for men in the field, a remarkable improvement that signaled the end of the days of hardtack and other hard breads. (Koch, Story, pp. 64-65)

AUTUMN 1910

THE COMMISSARY General's Office participated in the Pure Food Show at the old Madison Square Garden in New York City. The office's exhibit consisted of a sample commissary and the articles it usually carried. (Koch, Story, p. 68)

1911

FEBRUARY 1911

THE NEW POST commissary sergeant stationed at Camp Wilhelm, a four-company scout post on Luzon in the Philippine Islands, had some interesting observations on his life and work: The companies were made up entirely of Filipinos. The four commissary sergeants played baseball with the Filipinos and several American civilian employees of the Quartermaster Corps. They also occasionally went to a dance hall "to learn how to dance with the native professionals." (Koch, Story, p. 72)

MARCH 3, 1911

CONGRESS GRANTED the commissary privilege to federal government officials who were located at or near Army posts. (56 Stat. 1047)

SEPTEMBER 1911 GENERAL ORDER No. 124 authorized the commanding officers of vessels with pay officers attached to maintain ship's stores "if advisable." This made the operation of a ship's store optional. (NRS News Digest, Apr 1976, pp. 3-4)

SEPTEMBER 1911 AT FORT SANTIAGO near Manila, the commissary sergeant was in charge of the depot commissary's cold storage and was responsible for China. (Koch, *Story*, pp. 74-75)

OCTOBER 1911

U.S. Military History: The Navy received its first aircraft—one built by the Wright brothers, two by Glenn Curtiss.

sending packinghouse supplies to thirty-eight different installations in the Philippines and two in

1912

APRIL 15, 1912

World History: The RMS Titanic struck an iceberg shortly before midnight and sank in the Atlantic Ocean around 2:20 a.m., killing almost fifteen hundred passengers and crew. Only seven hundred survived.

1912

COMMISSARY General of Subsistence **Henry G.** Sharpe stepped down from his post.

1912

Food Marketing & Technology: Small prizes were added to each package of Cracker Jack. Edwin Brandenburger invented cellophane. (Elkort, Food, p. 29)

AUG. 24, 1912

CONGRESS merged the Subsistence and Pay Departments with the Quartermaster Department. The new organization was under the control of the chief of the Quartermaster Corps of the Army, which came under the direct command of the Commanding General, Services of Supply. This became effective on November 1, 1912. (U.S. Congress, Act of August 24, 1912, Section 3 [37]





1913: BAKER'S SCHOOL at Newport, Rhode Island. While Navy commissaries—aka ships' stores ashore—focused on the retail side of food supply, bakers were still needed aboard ships and in mess halls ashore. Occasionally their handiwork made it into commissaries. Like their Army counterparts, Navy personnel supplemented mess food with commissary purhcases. U.S. Navy Historical Center

Stat. 91]; Porter and Wilson, "Guide," *QMR*, Mar - Apr 1936, p. 49; Koch, *Story*, p. 77)

The Quartermaster Corps traditionally furnished transportation, clothing, equipment, and had responsibility for national cemeteries and the construction and repair of quarters and transportation facilities. It now added the duties of feeding the Army, pay and other fiscal matters, and responsibility for overseas cemeteries in wartime. It also took over the old Subsistence Department commissary sales stores. (Risch, *QM Support*, p. 564, *QM Corps*, p. 5; William F. Ross & Charles F. Romanus, *The Quartermaster Corps in the War Against Germany*, pp. 1-2; Stat. 591-93)

NOV. <u>1, 1912</u>

EFFECTIVE DATE of Act of August 24. Army commissaries were now under the control of the chief of the Quartermaster Corps of the Army. (U.S. Congress, *Act of Aug. 24, 1912,* Section 3 [37 Stat. 91]; Koch, *Story,* p. 77)

1913

MAY 1913

NEW ARMY field service regulations introduced new concepts in the organization and support of a modern field army. The regulations foresaw the development of two types of field quartermaster officers: (1) a communication zone, or "pipeline" quartermaster to supervise the filling of a system of base depots with supplies; and (2) a tactical, or "spigot," quartermaster to draw supplies for his unit at a depot or railhead and issue them for consumption in battle areas. (Ross and Romanus, *QM Corps:*, p. 2)

MAY 1913

THE ARMY again prohibited the sale of alcoholic beverages at canteens and post

exchanges but allowed seeds for post gardens to be purchased with PX funds or company funds. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 134)

1914

1914

GENERAL ORDER No. 81 limited the number of quartermaster salesrooms at military posts to one. The salesrooms carried subsistence stores and quartermaster supplies. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 134)

1914

PUBLICATION of War Department Bulletin No. 12 listed only half as many items authorized for sale as War Department Circular No. 75 would in 1922. (L.C. Webster, "The Commissary Today and Yesterday," *QMR*, Sep-Oct 1925, p. 30)

1914

IN THE ANNUAL appropriations act, Congress changed the title of "Chief of Quartermaster Corps of the Army" to the more familiar "Quartermaster General." (Risch, *QM Support*, p. 564; Stat. 356)

1914

Food Marketing: The Gerrard family brought partial self-service and alphabetical product shelving to their Alpha-Beta stores in California. (Randolph McAusland, Supermarkets: 50 Years of Progress, 1980, p. 21)

JANUARY -APRIL 1914 THE SMALL commissary at Benicia Arsenal, California, probably typical for the time, was open only ninety minutes daily. The place also had a post garden for fresh vegetables served in the mess. (Koch, *Story*, pp. 84-85)

APRIL 27, 1914

CONGRESS stipulated that funds received as proceeds of authorized sales were available during the balance of the fiscal years in which the sales were made, and during the entire succeeding fiscal year. Any balance remaining reverted to the Treasury's general funds. Congress also guaranteed that members of each service would pay the same prices as their counterparts in other services at commissaries run by the other service. For example, Navy personnel would pay the same prices at an Army commissary as would Army personnel. (U.S. Congress, Act of Congress, 27 Apr 1914; 38 Stat. 361, USC 10: 1281; 1898 Military Law 1929)

JUNE 28, 1914

Military History: Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sofia, were assassinated on June 28, 1914, by a Serb national in Sarajevo, Bosnia. The event ignited World War I involving most of Europe and the United States. Of the 65

million men who fought in the war, nearly 8.5 million died and more than 20 million were wounded.

AUGUST 1914

World Events/Technology: The Panama Canal opened for business after ten years of construction.

1915

1915

BY ACT of Congress, the Revenue Cutter Service became part of the U.S. Coast Guard. (Porter and Wilson, "Guide," Part II, [*QMR*, May-Jun 1936], p. 45; 38 Stat. 800; 1799 Military Law of 1929)

APRIL 22, 1915

Food Technology: Henry Ford marketed the first motorized tractor. (Elkort, *Food*, p. 29)

MAY 7, 1915

Military History and Technology: The Germans launched the first poison gas attack at Ypres, Belgium.

JULY 18, 1915

Military History: A German submarine sank the British passenger liner Lusitania. Of 1,962 people aboard the liner, 1,201 lost their lives. Although this incident did not immediately plunge the United States into World War I, it did bolster anti-German sentiment in the United States.

AUGUST 1915

U.S. Military History: U.S. military intervention in local revolt in Haiti. Teddy Roosevelt was no longer president, but this was another "Big-Stick" style extension of American power in the Caribbean. This occupation of the island relied extensively upon African-American soldiers. The Army and Marines both stayed until 1934.

1916

THE APPROPRIATIONS Act of 1916 referred to Army Regulation 1241 permitting the sale of commissary supplies to enlisted personnel on active duty or retired. Retirees had been mentioned in the law and the regulations as early as June 28, 1879 (see previous citations), but the reference had clearly been to retired officers, not enlisted. (Operational Alternatives, 89, Jan 1975 OMB Commissary and Exchange Study)

1916

1916

Military History & Technology: The tank was used in warfare for the first time by the British.

MARCH 1916 -JAN. 17, 1914 U.S. Military History: Led by Gen. John J. "Black Jack" Pershing, the U.S. Army pursued Pancho Villa in Mexico in an operation dubbed



"the Mexican punitive expedition."

To support border operations stretching from Del Rio, Texas, to Yuma, Arizona, the Quartermaster Department ran a depot in El Paso, Texas, that shipped rations, including fresh beef, bread, and ice to border stations three times a week. (Koch, *Story*, pp. 90-91)

MAY 1916 - 1924

U.S. *Military History:* U.S. Marines occupied Santo Domingo during a period of violence and unrest.

AUG. 19, 1916

CONGRESS renewed the Act of April 27, 1914, guaranteeing any commissary would charge customers of every military service the same prices. (U.S. Congress, 1, *Act of August 19, 1916*, Section 1, 39 Stat. 630; U.S.C. 10:1233, 34:538; 2001 Military Law 1929; Porter and Wilson, "Guide," Part II [QMR, May-Jun 1936], p. 47)

SEPT. 6, 1916

Food Marketing: Piggy Wiggly opened in

Memphis, Tennessee, making it the world's first completely self-service grocery store, conceived and operated by thirty-five-year-old Clarence Saunders. This was the first true predecessor of the modern supermarket. (McAusland, 50 Years, p. 17; Life, Bicentennial Issue, p. 100; Godfrey M. Lebahr, Chain Stores in America, 1959-1962; pub. 1963, p. 34)

1917

1917

GEN. John J. Pershing, head of the American Expeditionary Forces, established the Services of Supply to support his field armies. A general purchasing board was established under the direction of Brig. Gen. Charles G. Dawes. This board was intended to eliminate competition between services and



Gen. John J. Pershing



quantity or quality of supplies. (Ross & Romanus, *QM Corps*, pp. 3-4)

THE COMBAT ration developed before World War I proved insufficient, where front-line cooking was impractical and spoilage due to poison gas or dampness was possible. The new special reserve or "trench" ration, designed to subsist twenty-five men for one day, was sealed in galvanized iron containers to protect against gas contamination. (U.S. Army, *Operational Rations, Current and Future*, 1983, p. 6)

allied nations for supplies; it did not control

Food Marketing: Cracker Jack introduced a patriotic red, white, and blue package graced by a boy in a sailor suit and his dog. Founder F. W. Rueckheim modeled the boy, known as Sailor Jack, after his grandson, who had died at the age of eight. The dog, Bingo, was modeled after the grandson's pet dog.

1917

New Product: Ed Cox of San Francisco invented a pre-soaped pad for cleaning pots, and his wife named it S.O.S. for "Save Our Saucepans," though some customers thought it meant "Save On Soap" for wartime voluntary rationing.

JAN. 1, 1917

THE SUPPLIES division was created within the Quartermaster Corps. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 134)

MARCH 31, 1917

AN OFFICER at the El Paso, Texas, Army depot later recalled that they kept cats in the warehouse to protect against mice and rats. (Koch, *Story*, p. 96)

APRIL 6, 1917 -NOV. 11, 1918 AMERICAN participation in World War I: When the United States declared war, the Quartermaster Corps had only four types of field units: bakery, truck, pack, and wagon companies. Col. Harry L. Rogers became brigadier general and chief quartermaster, and through his leadership the QM Corps adapted to new dimensions of warfare. (Ross & Romanus, *QM Corps*, pp. 2-3)

1917

JULY 20, 1917

U.S. Military & Social History: First drawing of names for the military draft under the provisions of Selective Service.

AUG. 10, 1917

AN EXECUTIVE order created the Food Administration. The subsistence division of the Quartermaster Corps would later act "in subordination to and in close cooperation with" this agency, which was headed by future **President Herbert Hoover**. (Thus the wartime slang, "Hooverizing," was applied to voluntary food rationing.) (War Department *Annual Reports*, 1918: Report of the Quartermaster General, pp. 272-73; Pete Skirbunt, "The Cupboards were Bare," in *Vision* magazine, Oct 1992, p. 25)

AUG. 15, 1917

STORAGE BRANCH for the supplies division of the Office of the Quartermaster General was created. (War Department Annual Reports, 1918: Report of the Quartermaster General, p. 273; QM Office Order No. 76)

OCT. 16, 1917

THE WAREHOUSING division was created, replacing the storage branch of the Office of the Quartermaster General. The division also included the work of the Quartermaster's cable service and overseas shipment branch. (War Department Annual Reports, 1918: Report of the Quartermaster General, p. 273; QM Office Order No. 107)

OCT. 25, 1917

World History/Politics: Bolsheviks led by Vladimir Lenin seized power in Russia. Lenin and Leon Trotsky seized power from Russian socialist Alexander F. Kerensky, who had taken over the government in July 1917.

NOV. 8, 1917

THE QUARTERMASTER warehousing division was placed in charge of determining Army needs and the control of supplies for overseas, as well as for camps and posts within the United States. (War Department *Annual Reports*, 1918: Report of the Quartermaster General, p. 273; QM Office Order No. 116)

DEC. 11, 1917

A FOOD PURCHASE board was organized to coordinate purchases of food products for the military. The board consisted of the Army quartermaster general, the Navy paymaster general, the head of the Food Administration's Division of Coordination of Purchase (representing the Allied Provision Export Commission), and a representative of the Federal Trade Commission. (War Department *Annual Reports*, 1918: Report of the

Quartermaster General, pp. 308-09)

1918

1918

Medical History: Influenza epidemic killed 548,000 people in the United States and 20 million worldwide.

JAN. 2, 1918

A SUBSISTENCE division was created within the Office of the Quartermaster General to provide centralized control with decentralized purchase. Its duties would include "all matters connected with the food supply." (Risch, *QM Support*, 615; War Department *Annual Reports*, 1918: Report of the Quartermaster General, pp. 302-03; QM Office Order No. 129)

FEB. 25, 1918

ESTABLISHMENT of a garden service branch in the supplies division of the Quartermaster's Office. Run by 157 officers on three thousand acres of land in France, the branch produced ten million pounds of vegetables between February to November 1918 at one-third the commercial price.

APRIL 16, 1918

THE QUARTERMASTER Corps' warehousing division became the depot division. (War Department Annual Reports, 1918: Report of the Quartermaster General, p. 273; QM Office Order No. 376)

MAY 1918

BY AUTHORITY of President Woodrow Wilson, a tobacco ration was established for Army troops serving overseas. (Report of the Quartermaster General, p. 304)

JUNE 4, 1918

THE HEAD of the depot division became director of quartermaster operations. (War Department *Annual Reports*, 1918: Report of the Quartermaster General, p. 273; QM Office Order No 459)

JULY 1918

BY THIS TIME, over one million U.S. troops were in Europe. American newspapers proclaimed U.S. soldiers to be the best-fed troops on earth. Concepts developed earlier were put into practice: the rolling kitchen or the field kitchen (known to the troops as the "bean gun"); reliable refrigeration; dehydrated vegetables; the use of deboned, rather than carcass, beef; the creation of an official garden service to produce fresh vegetables; and the increased use of instant coffee. (Dickson, *Chon*, pp. 40-43; Staff Sgt. Randy Goins, "A History of Army Rations" in *Troop Support Digest*, Winter 1986, p. 33)

AUG. 15, 1918

THE DEPOT division was redesignated the

operating division. (War Department Annual Reports, 1918: Report of the Quartermaster General, p. 273; QM Office Order No. 522)

AUG. 15, 1918

PHOTOS taken at Nanteuil-sur-Marne, France, show trucks used as rolling sales stores run by Quartermaster Sales Unit No. 10. The caption reads, "These [commissary units have rolling stores which operate from the division sales commissary and go to the front lines so that the men may be supplied with articles which they otherwise could not obtain." These rolling stores were the predecessors of the tactical field exchanges of the 1990s.



MAKESHIFT COMMISSARY in France, World War I: Many of the commissaries near the front were placed in abandoned buildings. These fourteen men posing for the photographer no doubt included men assigned to the store, but some were probably customers. Photo courtesy Col. George H. Oliver, U.S. Air Force retired. BELOW: Soldiers purchase items from a mobile commissary in France. These mobile stores were the descendants of the sutler's cart and the ancestors of modern tactical field exchanges (TFEs). Mobile units could go close to the front and serve men in a variety of locations. Tobacco and canned goods were the main items sold. Another view of this mobile unit is on pages 124-25. National Archives

NOV. 7-11, 1918

Military History: Germany negotiated an armistice with Allies to end the war.

1919

JAN. 1, 1919

THE PRICE LIST for the Naval Operating Base Hampton Roads, Virginia, commissary showed 645 line items. (Price List, Hampton Roads)

FEB. 14, 1919

PUBLICATION of the twenty-seven-page Summary of Operations of the Subsistence Division from Beginning of the War until Signing of the Armistice by the U.S. Quartermaster Corps provided much information about the eating habits of American soldiers during the war and the Army's ability to feed them. Among other things, the report said: Canned tomatoes were especially valued by the men; the American soldier was "fond of candy, tobacco, and chewing gum"; and during the war the subsistence division had shipped overseas a monthly average of twenty million cigars and twentyfive million cigarettes. (Quartermaster Corps, Subsistence Division, Summary of the Operations of the Subsistence Division from Beginning of the War until Signing of the Armistice, 14 Feb 1919, pp. 22-23)

AUG. 3 -SEPT. 24, 1919

> THE MILITARY continued selling surplus, but it was done through Army resale stores open to the

THE WAR Department sold \$12 million in war surplus, including subsistence items, through Post Office outlets. (Risch, QM Support, 704)

public. They sold \$35 million worth of goods, 75 percent of which was subsistence. (Risch, QM Support, p. 704; Annual Report of the Quartermaster General, 1920, p. 50. Also, RG 120, War Dept Historical Files, Box 165-1: Brief History of QM and Purchase Demobilization Activities, pp. 248-50)

OCT. 22, 1919

THE NAVY allowed the Naval Proving Grounds at Dahlgren, Virginia, and Indian Head, Maryland, to establish an employees' co-operative store. (Dahlgren papers; specifically, "Memorandum for the Inspector," from F. A. Daubin to the Dahlgren Inspector of Ordnance, 28 Dec 1926; Josephus Daniels to Inspector of Ordnance in Charge, NPG Indian Head, Maryland, 22 Oct 1919, Subj.: "Use of building on Government land for cooperative store.")

SEPT. 25 -**JUNE 3, 1919**

6

MODERNIZATION, SELF-SERVICE 1920-1945 AND WORLD WAR II

HE 1920s BEGAN as a time of postwar recession, which was followed by one of the most remarkable decades in the country's history. The magnitude of the social, technological, economic, and moral changes the country experienced in the Roaring Twenties was unparalleled in American history. The heights of boisterous optimism, unfettered prosperity, and giddy lunacy were matched only by the depths of the Depression that followed.

By 1929, the major components—or at least the frills—of modern American civilization were in place. If we could travel back in time, this decade is the earliest we could visit and still feel reasonably at home. This sense of familiarity applied to nearly every aspect of life, including civilian grocery stores and their military counterparts.





1920s: NEWPORT, Rhode Island. This store at Naval Station Newport was partially self-service, evidenced by the open bins in the background. The Cooperator, Army Times Publications

These stores were far from what they would become, but they were on their way. Stock lists were starting to grow, and equipment for keeping foods fresh and cold was becoming more commonplace. By the end of the decade a few stores were calling themselves "super markets." They offered what they called "one-stop shopping" because they combined the features of a meat market, fish market, dairy, a farmer's market, a dry goods grocery, and a general store.

The advent of supermarkets was prompted by the Great Depression and made possible by the automobile, which enabled customers to drive out of their neighborhoods to shop at these huge new establishments and enjoy the well-advertised savings.

It would take awhile for the supermarkets to catch on with the public. It would take the military's commissaries even longer to catch up to them, but it would happen. Today's superstores and supermarkets, civilian and military, can trace their roots to those first innovative markets of the 1920s.

There were many reasons why commissaries had stock lists that would be considered small later in the twentieth century. In the period between World Wars I and II, stores at each post and base purchased their own perishable items and kept their purchases limited to what they knew they could sell. Because cooling and freezing

equipment was limited, perishables were largely obtained from local sources. Meanwhile, depots bought nonperishables for direct delivery in regular quantities.

Each base and post provided its own building for use as a commissary. The size and condition of the buildings varied. If the local commander took an interest in the commissary, the store was likely to be in a newer, larger, or better building. Whatever the structure, the buildings always seemed too small for the number of customers that used them. Small stores meant limited hours and small stock lists that included only the most popular items.

The marital status of the enlisted men also affected the stock list. Few of them had families, and the single men lived on post, in barracks, where they were fed in mess halls. The Army had a garrison ration for peacetime use. This ration, unlike rations of the nineteenth century, was both healthful and filling when prepared properly and with the prescribed items. It consisted of thirty-nine components, including meat, fruit, vegetables, dairy products, beverages, and various ingredients used in food preparation. The quality of all components was prescribed by federal specifications. Garrison soldiers did not need commissaries with huge stock lists. A few additional items would do nicely as long as the men were being properly fed, and in 1920, the men

were eating considerably better than their predecessors had thirty years previously.

Men with families had a different situation. Most married men in the service were officers and did not usually share in the common mess. Officers needed considerably more items than enlisted men when shopping at the commissary. By the standards of the day, the commissaries were well-stocked. The stock lists of the 1920s seem small nowadays, but today's reader needs to remember that commissaries have traditionally taken their cues from civilian grocery stores. The civilian stores of the 1920s did not have much larger stock assortments than the commissaries.

The technology and transportation of that time also dictated the size of the stock lists. Product proliferation, national name brands, and huge selections of produce and frozen foods were still things of the future. Commissaries and private-sector stores had to acquire many of their perishable goods locally or regionally.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

When the stock market crash set off the Great Depression in 1929, it also triggered changes in the food retailing industry.

Many people lost their jobs. Twenty-five percent is the usual figure cited, but this calculation leaves out those who lost good jobs and managed to find lower-paying ones. Although such jobs were better than

none, the workers who held them were still in serious financial trouble even though they were counted among the employed. Thus the employment statistics were misleading.

Adversity drove the market. People with blue-collar, perhaps part-time jobs found themselves being fired or laid off. In some cases, grocers could no longer afford to pay many clerks and decided to switch to self-service stores.

Innovations used by the supermarkets included adding concessionaires to their operations, relying on national brands (allowing the grocer to cut advertising costs), and moving away from prime downtown locations to the outskirts of cities and towns. The automobile made it possible for the clientele, most of whom came from the cities, to visit these stores. Another advantage of these outlying stores was that they usually had ample parking, an important consideration since (despite the Depression) plenty of Americans were driving cars.

There had been large food stores before, but never on the scale that had come about because of the Depression, when price and convenience offered by self-service were paramount, while courteous (and expensive) personal service temporarily took a back seat.

CIVILIAN MARKET INNOVATIONS

With or without the Depression, the years between World Wars I and II would have been an eventful era in the civilian grocery industry. Grocers found themselves in a rapidly changing marketplace that had gone from boom to bust overnight. The one constant in the industry, of course, was that no matter how bad things were, people still had to eat. They might lose their home or sell their car, but they couldn't do without food.

By the 1920s, the food retailing business was growing into an immense industry. Indicative of that trend was the publication of a new trade magazine, *Progressive Grocer*, in an era of new and influential magazines such as *Time* and *The American Mercury*. The appearance of a grocery trade magazine was a sign that the industry was beginning

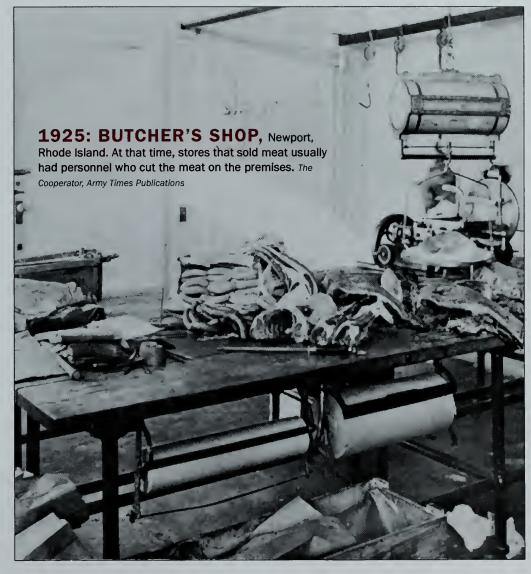
to picture itself in a new way. It was not only a way to make a living, it also was a profession with standards, ethics, technologies, and terminologies all its own. It was becoming big business on a national scale.

The stores themselves were changing, too. Many persons wished to take credit for having created the first supermarket or for being the first to develop certain supermarket practices. Like the simultaneous, independent inventions of the telephone by Alexander Graham Bell and Elisha Gray, there were many individuals who had legitimate claims to having been the first in the various phases of the development of modern supermarkets.

There was plenty of room to share the credit, since so much was involved. Previously mentioned was the work in the self-service concept by the Gerrard family and Clarence Saunders' Piggly Wiggly store, but there is more to a supermarket than that. For example, in 1920 when John

and Paul Cistrino founded the Upham's Corner Market in Dorchester, Massachusetts, the self-proclaimed "Biggest Little Store in the World," it had many of the features of a modern supermarket. The store may have pioneered the concept of combining a meat market and a fish market with a grocery, as well as providing a free parking lot.

Albers Super Market in Cincinnati may have had one of the best claims for the first use of the term "supermarket" by a chain of stores. The owner, a former president of Kroger, was widely criticized for keeping the stores open for evening shopping because it took store workers, who were often female, away from their families. It was also deemed to be unsafe to have these ladies walking home by themselves at night. But automobile transportation did away with much of the fear factor, and money became more of an issue for working families during the Depression. The part-time



Evolution of the SHOPPING CART

E954: MUNICH, Germany.

carts were in vogue.

National Archives

NSPIRED BY the functional simplicity of a wooden, folding chair, Sylvan Goldman, owner of several grocery stores in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, invented the shopping cart in 1937.

Today, they're known by different names in different locales: shopping baskets, grocery carts, market baskets, buggies, push carts, and even trollies. Goldman called them "folding basket carriers," because that's exactly what they were: folding metal frames, equipped with handles and wheels, that carried two hand-baskets in which customers had traditionally placed their grocery purchases. The carriers increased the amount a person could easily transport and purchase. Patrons would take the baskets off the carrier once they reached the checkout and place them on the counter. The baskets were then stacked and the carriers were folded for storage until needed again.

The concept was simple: make shopping easier for the customers and they'll buy more on each visit. Quite possibly they'll also visit the store more frequently. Sales would increase as a result, and grocer and customers would all be delighted.

Goldman conceptualized his folding carrier in 1936 and got Fred Young, a maintenance man with Goldman's stores, to help build the prototype. After months of experiments, they introduced the cart to the public in Oklahoma City on June 4, 1937.

As a natural innovator, Goldman hadn't considered that anyone would resist such an obvious improvement. Stores were getting bigger and stocking more items, and he was providing shoppers an easy way to transport those items. He was shocked when his customers simply didn't want to use them!

Upon reflection, he realized that people shy away from change. All their lives, they'd been using hand baskets, and they seemed to feel selfconscious about using the carriers, which just made life too easy. Women found them unfashionable, men feared using the carriers would make them appear to be weak, and older people thought they'd look infirm or helpless.

So Goldman hired attractive models of all ages and both genders to push the things around the store, pretending they were shopping. A store greeter offered each shopper a cart, saying, "Everybody's using them—why not you? Give it a try!" Gradually, the idea caught on.

By August, Goldman had set up the Folding Basket Carrier Company and took his invention to the Super Market Institute in New York City. There, he found himself a partner, Kurt Schweitzer, who quit his own business to become Goldman's chief of sales for locales east of the Mississippi River.

At first there was some resistance from people who worried that children would get hurt using the carts, causing lawsuits and bad publicity. That concern is still with us, as the warnings on every shopping cart demonstrate. But Goldman made a film showing how the carts were to be used, and sales skyrocketed. Responding to the child-safety issue, in

1940 he designed a cart with a child seat.

In 1946, Orla E. Watson of Kansas City, Missouri, designed "Telescoping" carts with hinged baskets that could be pushed together for storage. These carts carried more goods than Goldman's, and did not have to be unfolded and assembled with each use. His Western Machine Company made the first ones, which were used at Floyd Day's Super Market in Kansas City in 1947. Later, Telescope Carts, Inc., fabricated and distributed them. At the same time, Goldman came up with a "Nest Cart" that was very similar. Both men had patents and for awhile there was contention over who really owned the rights to the concept. Eventually they came to an agreement that allowed Goldman to produce the carts while Watson Rakish, streamlined, double-basket retained the patent and collected royalties.

> Commissaries didn't immediately adopt them, but by 1942, Goldman's carriers were

beginning to catch on. Carts with child seats weren't yet needed, since young children were allowed only in a handful of commissaries. In those days, many commissaries offered some type of home delivery, so mom could stay home with the kids. When home delivery began to disappear, mothers began pressuring the commissaries to either provide child care or allow children in the stores and provide carts equipped with child seats. Providing the carts was easier and cheaper, but the children's mere presence rankled some of the more traditional commissary shoppers—much as single-line queuing and two-way aisles bother some shoppers today.

Today, millions of shopping carts are used daily around the world. They come in thousands of shapes, styles, and sizes. The baskets are metal or plastic; if plastic, they can be any color desired. Some are equipped with large riding seats or plastic "cars" for kids, and electric motors for the physically challenged and senior citizens. They're not limited to supermarkets and are often found in drug stores, discount department stores, and a variety of other establishments. New supercarts are being used in the civilian sector. Made of molded plastic, they hold up to 600 pounds, are more maneuverable, are more comfortable for kids, have nylon wheels that do not wobble, and, when nested together, are less likely to jam than their metal predecessors.

Carts of the future are already being tested in the civilian sector. They are "smart carts" equipped with miniature computers that can read bar codes, weigh produce, calculate the value of products in the cart, keep track of the patron's shopping list, locate products in the store, and even accept credit card numbers, eliminating the need for standing in checkout lines. No one has yet developed a "hovercart" without wheels, which would essentially render a full cart weightless, but, since it would make things a lot easier for older customers or people with bad backs, it may be only a matter of time before it happens.

Whatever the size, material, and color, all these carts have a common pedigree: They are directly descended from Watson's telescoping cart and Goldman's nesting cart and folding basket carrier.





CATCHING Zs'. "Kiddie carts" like this one at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, in 2004, are designed to keep their occupants safe, even while napping. DeCA photo: Larry Bentley



▲ 2002: ALL ABOARD. This photo, taken at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia, shows the shopping cart with the two-seat addition in the rear.

DeCA photo: Pete Skirbunt







▲ 1995: MOTORIZED CART. A retiree uses an electric shopping cart to shop at the Tobyhanna Army Depot store in Pennsylvania. This recent innovation, originally expected as early as the 1950s, enables people who have difficulty walking to do their own shopping. This cart's basket is larger than the baskets of other models. DeCA photo: Randy Epps, Tobyhanna commissary

◀ 1967: 'HOW 'BOUT THIS?' This mother and her child at Naval Air Station Quonset Point, Rhode island, make the most of the shopping cart's child seat. These carts allowed families to shop and keep their children in tow.

Military Market, Army Times publications



▲ 1980s: CUSTOMERS at Fort Lewis, Washington, wait for their turns in the checkout lines. Notice there is very little difference bewteen this cart and the one in the Fort Riley photo from the late 1990s. TSA photo, DeCA historical file mployer and employee, and the stores more popular because their hours trees convenient. Predictably, the apposition to after-dark store hours gradully vanished.

That the food-retailing business itself was changing was evident in a number of ways—from the establishment of the first fast-food franchise (A & W Root Beer in 1925) and the founding of the Independent Grocers Alliance of America (IGA in 1926) to the proliferation of regional chains of large supermarkets. Safeway was founded in 1926 and Kroger, which had opened its first store in 1883, opened its first "store of the future" in 1930. Of the early chains, these two are probably the best known today, but there were plenty of others.

In New Jersey there was King Kullen (1930), whose appeal was based on nofrills prices, as it promised huge savings, a pitch that brought increasing attention as the Depression worsened. In 1932-33, there were the first Big Bear (first at a former Buick plant in New Jersey, then at a former skating rink in Columbus, Ohio); Standard in Oklahoma; Food Fair in Pennsylvania; and Alpha-Beta wholesale in California. Alpha-Beta took its name from the Gerrard family's experiment with shelving foods alphabetically. The concept didn't last because the task became too complicated and confusing, but the chain's name endured.

Meanwhile, product proliferation was just beginning. One major contributor was Clarence Birdseye, who in 1925 invented a method of quick-freezing food. Birdseye wasn't the only one trying, but he was the most successful. His frozen vegetables hit the market five years later. Another new product, the vitamin pill, was introduced in 1936, the same year the Hormel company first marketed Spam, a canned combination of pork shoulder and ham. Spam later became a monotonous staple in military mess halls and field kitchens. Years later, President Dwight Eisenhower would issue a tongue-in-cheek "presidential pardon" to Hormel for having shipped so much of the stuff to American forces during World War

II. On the other hand, our Soviet allies loved it. It was far better than what they would have had otherwise. The Russians received tons of it from the United States, and several of their leaders later commented that Spam had helped win the war.

MILITARY STORES IN THE '20s AND '30s

On the military side of the food market, American soldiers were eating better after World War I. The new daily ration included apples, cheese, pickles or cucumbers, milk, coffee, beef, bacon, jam, butter, cocoa, cinnamon, various other spices, dried peaches, and those old favorites, canned tomatoes, beans, and coffee. The ration also specified turkey was to be substituted for beef on Thanksgiving and Christmas. To make sure everything went smoothly, the Quartermaster Subsistence School was established in Chicago in 1920 to bring professionalism to the troop-feeding process.

That same year, the Quartermaster Association was established to provide civilian-based support to subsistence operations and commissary operations. This became the Defense Supply Association (DSA) in 1961, and the American Logistics Association (ALA) in 1972.

The men were eating better, but the ration was, after all, still the ration. It included more items that people had at one time considered luxuries, but it still lacked variety. The government was willing to pay for this improved ration, but it also expected the men to buy their own supplements.

The result was that the commissaries would remain, though there was some confusion as to exactly what they should sell. In 1925, in an effort to stop confusing commissaries with exchanges, the Army adjutant general directed that all quartermaster sales stores in the continental United States be closed by March 31, 1926. These stores were duplicating the efforts of the commissaries and exchanges. In their place, *issue* commissaries would maintain the sales of ration articles and nonperishables as dictated by local needs. *Sales* commissaries would primarily sell groceries.

Wherever troop issue facilities were

located, there would also be a sales commissary; where there were no commissaries, the post exchange would sell food items. Quartermaster sales stores, which sold uniforms, shoes, boots, and all manner of other items, were not needed if a PX was available.

It's easy to see why the public often confused commissaries and exchanges. Product selections overlapped, and grocery sections were becoming common in exchanges. A lack of clear regulations on what products each facility was to stock helped to create this redundancy, as did the troops' habit of using the terms "commissary" and "exchange" synonymously.

BUMBOATS AND COOPERATIVES

The Navy, meanwhile, took steps to improve its commissary operations. In 1920, Navy regulations prohibited naval personnel from patronizing bumboat merchants. However, old habits and traditions died hard, mostly because of the limited stock assortment available in ships' stores, and the continuing operation of bumboats without official sanction. Finally, in 1924, the Navy issued a directive that pointedly reinforced the existing regulations and effectively ended sailors' patronage of bumboats. An era had passed. Now the Navy began to look to improving its ships' stores ashore and afloat.

To help out, a new cooperative, canteen-style operation began to appear: the ships' service stores. These initially had no actual legal foundation, but Navy regulations gave them official sanction in 1923. The stores were supervised by individual commanding officers and run with nonappropriated funds; any profits were used for the welfare and recreation of naval personnel. This regulation created a duplication of effort between ships' stores and ships' service stores, a redundancy that continued until 1943.

The Navy still lagged behind in establishing commissaries, and sometimes bases ended up opening cooperative stores, similar to the Army's exchanges and canteens of the 1890s. These stores were much-needed, but they sometimes drew the ire of nearby private-sector merchants.



1938: CHIEFS' MESS. Sailors enjoy coffee and doughnuts aboard the USS *Brooklyn*. The cups and saucers seen here were called "bouncing glass" by the men—the familiar, nearly indestructible ship's china. In 1924, the Navy had eliminated its long-held practice of augmenting ships' stores with local bumboat merchants. Instead, it sanctioned ships' service stores, a combination of exchanges and the early Army canteens. The stores became less vital, though no less popular, as the rations and cooking improved. Once ashore, sailors patronized their commissaries. U.S. Navy Historical Center

In 1927, seven civilian store owners petitioned against the community store at the Naval Surface Warfare Center at Dahlgren, Virginia, claiming that the base store was unfairly competing with them and was actually selling to civilians.

This complaint would become a recurring issue, revisited in many ways and many places since. It was always a source of some commotion. However, the Dahlgren case was straightforward, and today, commissary proponents could use much of the Navy's response as a model argument.

The chief of the Navy's Bureau of Ordnance, Admiral C. C. Bloch, had responsibility for Dahlgren and its firing range. After conducting an investigation, he responded that the store was not a reg-

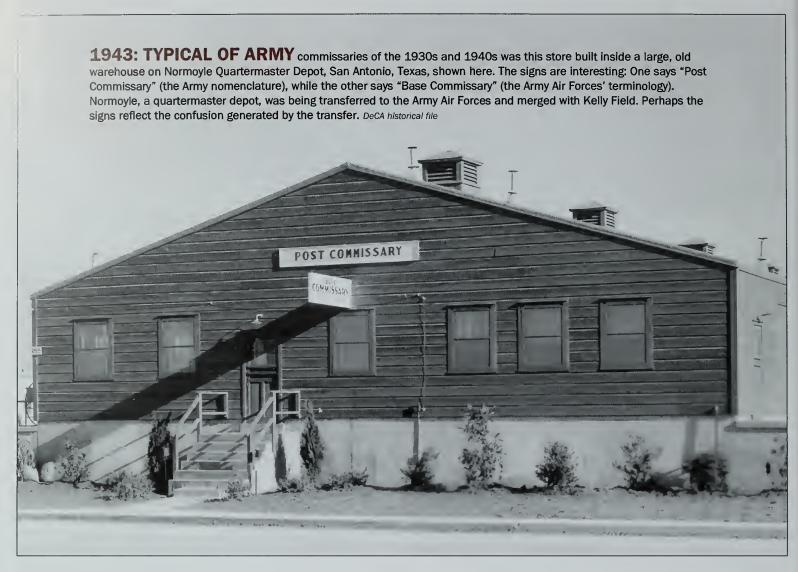
ular military commissary, but rather a coop, run by the sailors. Therefore, it was not prohibited from doing business with civilians. However, it did not normally sell to civilians. Only 1 percent of its monthly sales were to local civilians who could not get the products they wanted from private-sector stores. The Dahlgren co-op sold to them as a gesture of goodwill and neighborliness.

Most importantly, Bloch noted that five of the seven civilian stores had not even been established before the base opened. This meant the civilian stores were the ones competing with the Dahlgren store for military customers rather than the commissary competing for civilian customers. He also noted that only two of the stores were anywhere near the base, and all of the merchants had benefited from the base's establishment. Therefore, their petition was spurious. The Dahlgren store would remain in business.

This incident has lessons that directly relate to the modern debates over privatization. The points concerning competition and the benefits to the community are essentially the same arguments available to the commissaries when confronted by similar accusations today.

THE ORIGIN OF A MYTH

Events in the Navy would have some longrange effects on Army stores. In 1932, a single sentence given in testimony before the Naval Affairs Committee made it into



the public record, in print. It has haunted commissary backers ever since. This one, long, erroneous sentence said:

"Existing Army and Navy Exchanges and Commissaries had their origin in the canteens established to meet the personal and other requirements of enlisted men because of the isolation and inaccessibility of certain Army posts principally in the unsettled areas of the West, and because of the long voyages in past years of battleships and other fighting craft."

As has already been pointed out at great length, this was simply not true. The officer giving this testimony was probably familiar with the close association between Navy commissaries and exchanges but was misinformed as to the true origins of the Army commissaries. He appears to have been only mildly familiar with Navy history and not at all cognizant of the history of Army commissaries. The officer entirely ignored the origins of commissaries with the sutlers, bumboats, and post traders, and

the high prices charged by these merchants. He also failed to mention that the first Army commissaries had been established long before canteens and exchanges had ever existed.

The statement is also significant because it added to the false perception that Army commissaries had originally been meant only for isolated, remote posts. In fact, this statement seems to have been the source of subsequent misstatements by members of Congress, and it has been printed repeatedly in various reports ever since. The statement is almost certainly the source of the "remote posts myth" which would intermittently spring back to life and be used against the commissaries throughout the next sixty years.

OVERHEAD, PHONE ORDERS, AND DELIVERIES

In 1922, Congress reconfirmed the War Department's right to regulate the operation of commissaries, with the caveat that this authorization had to be renewed annually. But in 1927, the House Committee on Military Affairs recommended establishing commissaries permanently, eliminating the need for annual legislation to renew them. The commissaries would be less susceptible to budget fluctuations. But the measure did not pass, and commissary appropriation remained an item for annual consideration.

Cost of the commissaries to the taxpayer was certainly a consideration. In 1922, patrons began paying many of the expenses through an overhead charge. In effect, this was a surcharge. It would cover operating expenses, including the salaries of civilian personnel, but added nothing for profit, so prices remained below those of the private sector.

The stores themselves were getting better. A 1922 War Department publication showed twice as many items authorized for sale as in 1914. In the 1920s, the typical Army commissary sales store opened Monday through Friday from about 7:30 or 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. After a lunch break, it would reopen from 1 to 3 p.m. The store opened Saturday mornings but closed on Saturday afternoons and all day Sunday, holidays, and inventory days. Inventory was taken on the last day of each month.

Commissaries were actually superior to their modern counterparts in the areas of customer accounts and home delivery. Civilian sector stores had charge accounts, so commissaries granted such accounts to all officers and married enlisted men. These stores also took orders and made deliveries on a daily basis, so the commissaries did likewise. Telephone orders were offered, but were limited in size, number (usually only one per day), and distance from the store. Most stores did not deliver anywhere off post; others did, within a limited radius. In some places, deliveries were made only if the customer was ill or had no means of transportation.

The stores were all different, with their own local regulations and stock lists. In 1922, the store at Fort Monroe, Virginia, sold 619 different line items, not including fresh fruits and vegetables, which were stocked when in season. This total included different sizes of the same commodity. For example, baking powder showed up four times on the list because of two different brands and differing sizes.

There were plenty of non-food items, including razor blades, straight razors, and blade sharpeners; nineteen types of hand, facial, and shaving soaps; face cream, disinfectant, ink, insecticide, pocket knives, sewing needles, peroxide, paper, fountain pens, smoking pipes, shoe polish, shampoo, towels, liquid and powdered bluing, borax, whisk brooms, memo books, and playing cards. There were fifteen types of cigarettes and twenty-six types of cigars, along with an indeterminate amount of chewing and smoking tobaccos. The single most remarkable article was probably caviar, which sold at 73 cents for a threeounce can. In comparison, porterhouse steak was only 26 cents per pound. A box of Post Toasties or Corn Flakes was 1 cent. as was a single, fresh, Irish potato. Deliveries to customers' homes included standing orders for bread. Fresh meat and vegetables were delivered the same day as ordered.

Then as now, cutbacks in manpower caused problems at the stores. Lt. L. C. Webster of the Quartermaster Reserve, writing in The Quartermaster Review, commented on the amount of clerical work involved in even the simplest sales commissary operations, the numbers of people needed to provide good service, the policy of paying civilian employee salaries out of "overhead charge" funds, and impending cuts in military personnel. He said an experienced noncommissioned officer was needed as a floor manager, a position distinct from that of a commissary officer, and noted the bookkeeping load from the huge number of charge accounts and telephone orders.

Webster named various positions which, when held by civilians, were funded by the customers' overhead charge. These positions included a stock record clerk, stockers, deliverymen, delivery truck drivers (he called them *chauffeurs*), a man to collect orders, butchers, ice deliverymen, and drivers for the horse-drawn ice wagons.

Webster worried that as the Quartermaster Corps was reduced in size, the commissaries would not be able to provide the same high levels of service. He was right, but it would take some time for people to realize it.

ARMY-NAVY DIFFERENCES

The operations and stock lists of the Navy commissary store at San Diego's 32nd Street Naval Station reflected some major differences between the Navy's stores and those of the Army. The Navy tended to combine its exchanges with its commissaries. The San Diego store carried 810 different line items, of which only 390 were grocery items. Butter, cheese, eggs, and meat were not listed as grocery items but were listed separately. There was no mention of fresh fruits and vegetables. Food items included beverages, including beer; cakes and crackers, including one type of pretzel; and candies and confections,

including nuts, nut brittle, gum, Life Savers, and marshmallows.

Non-food items included brushes, 5 types of playing cards, 12 types and sizes of cigarettes, 35 different cigars, 4 chewing tobaccos and 13 smoking (for pipes or "roll-your-own") tobaccos; 16 pipes and one set of pipe cleaners; 19 different cleansing and scouring agents; 25 lubricating oils for cars and trucks, as well as tires and tubes; 16 pen and pencil items; 2 padlocks; 25 miscellaneous items, including combs, brooms, mops, shoelaces, and fly spray. There were 12 support stockings, 4 shoe polishes, and 13 soap powders.

The health and beauty items included 12 cold creams, 10 dental creams, 5 shaving creams; 2 dental powders; and mouth washes, mentholatum, peroxide and vaseline. There were 20 razors and razor blades, 26 hand and facial soaps, and 11 talcum and face powders. Aspirin, interestingly, was nowhere to be seen on the list, not even under another name such as headache powders.

The stock list is indicative of the close relationship between Navy exchanges and commissaries, which both traced their lineage to the ships' stores ashore. This relationship lasted until the advent of the Defense Commissary Agency in 1991.

The San Diego store had other outstanding features, one of them being a level of customer service unheard of today. A clerk could do the shopping for the customer, orders could be phoned in or dropped off in person, and items could be picked up daily until 5 p.m. (which was two hours after closing). Orders could be delivered to homes within a few miles of the store. Regular deliveries cost \$1 per month and were made three days per week. That's twelve deliveries for a dollar.

Most remarkable is a price list published for the store in 1927. It carried numerous advertisements for civilian-sector stores in the San Diego area that would give discounts to patrons who presented a commissary permit card or an identification card issued by the commissary. The merchants of the area knew how to work with their local commissary for their mutual benefit. Use of the discounts showed a

spirit of cooperation and appreciation for the armed forces. The animosity that would appear after World War II was nonexistent.

SUPERMARKET-STYLE COMMISSARIES

All commissaries were subject to the whim or energy level of the local people in charge. One simply had to compare the stock assortment of the Fort Monroe and San Diego stores with those at Fort Benning, Georgia, and Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to observe the differences. The commissary at Fort Benning carried 493 line items in 1933, while Fort Sill had only 248 in 1934, hundreds less than the other stores.

Most posts had one small grocery, but shoppers at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, had a choice of at least two: a "Piggly Wiggly"-style grocery store which was a combination of the sales and issue commissaries under one roof, and a grocery department at the post exchange. The exchange facility seems to have been the more pleasant of the two, with a greater variety of foods. The commissary was in an old warehouse with stark walls and a large number of "shiny cans"—canned items for troop issue. Both facilities were largely self-service.

By 1937, the commissary at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, was one of many stores that were experimenting with self-service. Since Sylvan Goldman's folding basket carriers were not yet popularized, the Carlisle store devised a track or slide (also called a "shelf" or a "basket counter"). It was covered with nickel-coated zinc and ran the length of the store aisles. Customers would slide their handbaskets on it while they shopped. Like a cafeteria line, the slide ended at the checkout counter, where the selections were totaled at the "stores control machine," which acted as an inventory check as well as a cash register.

Like all other commissaries of the day, the Carlisle store was placed inside a building that had been constructed for another purpose. In this case, it was an old warehouse. The challenge was, as Capt. Harry G. Dowdall of the Quartermaster Corps put it, "how to convert a section of an old warehouse into an attractive modern store—one the ladies of the post would



1934: FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas. The post had several grocery facilities in the 1930s; one carried mostly troop issue items. Shown here is a grocery section in the post exchange. Years later, a commissary was built in two large, connected warehouses. Courtesy Fort Sam Houston Museum

approve and admire. After all, that is the acid test."

The article recognized a truth that's familiar today: Other things in a commissary may be more important than color schemes and pleasing lighting effects, but there didn't seem to be any good reason why a commissary shouldn't be an attractive place in which to shop. That's what people were used to if they had done any shopping on the other side of the fence. If one goal was to keep spouses happy, thereby encouraging a soldier's reenlistment—in effect, the reenlistment of the entire family—then it was easy enough to make a store a little more pleasant.

Like many other military construction projects of the period, the remodeling was paid out of Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) funds. Before the remodeling, the commissary had only one door for all deliveries and all customers entering and exiting. The lighting was poor and shelf space was limited. The new store had none of these problems. It was considered state of the art in 1937 for a small commissary.

The arrangement of goods on the shelves seems cumbersome today. They were arranged in some type of alphabetical order, perhaps according to the Alpha-Beta model. Two enlisted clerks manned the store, one acting as cashier at the stores control machine (see sidebar on opposite page), the other calling out prices

and obtaining items that were intentionally kept out of customers' reach.

Tobacco products were kept under lock and key, as were candies, cosmetics, and perishable items. Pilferage and the illegal resale of commissary products at higher prices were already problems in 1937. The cashier and counter clerk were expected to keep a sharp eye on the customers, who were not entirely trusted, even in 1937.

Although the way in which the store operated must have made it obvious to the customers that they were always under scrutiny, civility was still important. As Dowdall emphasized, "It is important that ... clerks present a neat appearance and are always courteous. 'Thank you' is freely used by the clerks and it pays big dividends.' Maybe the courtesy took some of the edge off being watched.

Of course, today's reader must remember that the Army in 1937 was considerably more old-school, strict, and "by the book" than it was in the following years. Such watchfulness today would probably make most customers bristle with resentment, but soldiers and their spouses were probably less sensitive about such treatment in 1937.

Like other stores of the day, the Carlisle store offered home delivery. Orders for pickup or delivery were taken by phone or in person. Deliveries were made on post, with a limit of twelve items on each order. A special section in the store was used

Portrait of a Self-Service Store: Carlisle Barracks

ARLISLE BARRACKS, Pennsylvania, one of the most historical of all American military installations, was established in 1757. A Confederate army corps commanded by Gen. Richard Ewell moved through Carlisle in 1863 before marching to Gettysburg. The Indian school attended by one of the greatest athletes of all time, Native American Jim Thorpe, was located here. Today, Carlisle Barracks is the home of the Army War College.

Carlisle also has an interesting place in commissary history. Like other Eastern army posts, Carlisle established a sales commissary shortly after the Civil War. By 1937 it had a sales store that was the latest word in customer service. Although customers still required assistance to procure

items such as tobacco, candy, and toiletries, which were kept behind locked doors, it was largely a self-service operation. Patrons used handheld baskets that they placed on a continuous counter running around the entire store, ending at the checkout counter. Based upon the method used to move trays in cafeterias, it was similar to the slide arrangement being used concurrently at West Point (see photo on page 152).

Considered a small commissary, it had about 550 customer charge accounts, and \$13,000 or less in monthly sales. Like so many other commissaries at the time, the store was built inside a converted warehouse. It was open four hours per day, from 8 a.m. to 12 noon.

Two men conducted the business inside the store itself (bottom

photo). One ran the stores control machine, a combination cash register and mechanized inventory keeper; "stores" referred not to the commissary, but to the items stocked and sold. The second man assisted customers and, when someone checked out, he called out the price of each item to the clerk working the machine. One stockroom clerk (left photo) replenished the shelves, a job that was comparatively easy, as both the store and its stock list were small. There were three accounting clerks, one of whom took telephone orders. A driver from the motor transport section made deliveries, and a noncommissioned sales officer supervised the entire operation.

Photos: Quartermaster Review





specifically for the filling of delivery orders, which was done after the store closed at abon. The store had all afternoon to get the orders filled and delivered.

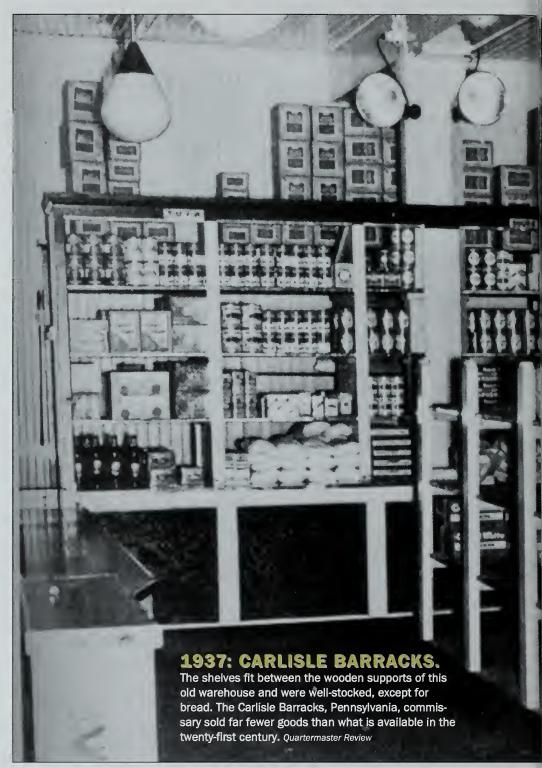
The Fort Myer, Virginia, commissary in 1938 was another self-service store. As at Carlisle Barracks, this store had a single checkout station, and featured wooden counters and railings and two screen doors—one for entry, one for exiting. Brand-name products on the shelves in 1938, and still familiar today, included Argo corn starch, Arm & Hammer baking soda, Campbell's soup, Camay and Ivory soaps, Kraft and Lea & Perrin's steak sauces, and Domino and Jack Frost sugar.

The 1938 commissary at West Point, New York, had two aisles and a meat market, the latter a feature that not all commissaries shared. One cashier and a delivery section provided service. The store seems to have lacked a produce department. Its average monthly business was \$36,000, much of which was due to telephone orders. The store was too small for heavy traffic, but it carried 626 charge accounts and filled several telephone orders on each account every month.

Like the Carlisle store, West Point also used a counter or slide on which patrons would place their handbaskets as they moved around the store. Two aisles were created by placing the slide down the middle of the store. The store occupied a unique location on the fourth floor of the utilities building. This was actually the *main* floor, because the building was located against a hill, and the fourth floor was at ground level on the hilltop.

Despite improving commissary conditions, some old restrictions remained. In some places, sales were limited to thirteen items because there were exactly thirteen lines on a sales ticket. In many stores, self-service was still only a dream. A clerk took the customer's list, slung a wire basket over his arm, and retrieved the items.

By the mid-1930s, there were 137 Army commissaries worldwide, 113 of them in the United States. They were all different, but they were all about to start undergoing changes that would bring them into the era of the modern supermarket.



SPOUSES AND OTHERS ADMITTED

Admission of spouses into the stores, though a common practice, seems to have been granted at the discretion of the local installation until midway through World War II, when they were granted universal access.

Spouses were the most recent group to get official shopping privileges, as the customer list had slowly been expanding for years. In 1920, officers and enlisted men of the Coast Guard, as well as officers of the Public Health Service, were permitted to purchase food from the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps at the same prices charged to men of those services. The same year, honorably discharged officers and enlisted men of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps who were receiving medical treatment from the Public Health Service were allowed to purchase subsistence store articles while undergoing that treatment.

Sometimes the regulations helped, and sometimes they hindered. For example, in



1923, commissary privileges were granted to Arno B. Cammerer, acting director of the Park Service at McKinley Park, Alaska. The Army Regulations of 1913 and a congressional act of March 3, 1911, had expanded the customer list in locales where there were no other sources of supply.

In 1934, however, Augustus H. Kingsbury Jr., the postmaster at Haines, Alaska, was not as fortunate. Kingsbury, who provided mail services to Chilkoot Barracks, applied for commissary shopping privi-

leges for himself and his family. He cited the cost of living and his low salary as reasons for making the application. The law of 1911 had authorized the granting of such privileges, and W. R. Gibson, assistant quartermaster general, received Kingsbury's application favorably. But Secretary of War George Dern denied the request. Dern stated, "Limited Army facilities and the attitude of local merchants have made it necessary to limit the exercise of this authority [to grant shopping privileges] to

those cases where the employee was so situated that Army commissaries were the only practical source of supply." Dern said this didn't apply to the area near Haines.

It's apparent that political pressures brought by local merchants were being felt at the War Department. Similar issues were raised all over the country, notably by merchants in the vicinity of Dahlgren, Virginia, in 1927 (as previously mentioned on page 135), and by an association of grocers in San Antonio, Texas, in 1943.

'BASKET COUNTER.'

At West Point, New York, in 1938, the commissary contained a counter (sometimes also called a "slide") on which patrons would place their handbaskets as they moved around the store. A basket is visible on the left side, halfway down the aisle. The counter in this photograph was placed in the middle of the floor, creating two aisles (see floor plan on page 152). The product shelving resembles bookcases.

Ouartermaster Review



Still, commissary shoppers were becoming a more varied, interesting group all the time. In May 1926, Congress allowed the Lighthouse Service—including officers and crews of vessels, light keepers and depot keepers—to purchase from the commissaries at the same prices charged to military officers and enlisted men. In 1937, these privileges were extended to widows of Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard personnel; and to U.S. Foreign Service civilians at naval stations outside the United States and Alaska. These privileges were not yet extended to the widows of Army personnel.

In 1941, an executive order directed the Veterans Administration to enforce laws governing Army and Army Air Corps "disabled, non-Regular officers." Since these officers were kept off the list of Army retirees and were no longer active duty, they and their widows were denied commissary privileges. The Navy and Marines, however, granted those privileges to their disabled officers and their wives. This inequity would not be addressed until 1949.

Spouses of active-duty military had been shopping at various locations for a long time, but it wasn't until 1943 that, for the first time, all wives of combat troops received permission to shop in all commissaries—a privilege that was soon extended to wives of all soldiers. The commissary benefit was also extended to the husbands



DURING World War II, the Quartermaster Corps helped supply each of the services with items common to all. While the Army Air Corps and Navy maintained their own requisitioning channels and depot systems, they received their supply of common items from Army sources within the theater of operations.

Photo: U.S. Army Quartermaster Web site

of female military members. Given the machismo orientation of the times, it would be interesting to know exactly how many male spouses actually used their privileges.

COMMISSARIES DURING WORLD WAR II

In the months before the United States entered World War II, the Army developed the "master menu," prepared for the feeding of soldiers who were not actually in combat. It also began establishing market centers, which used commercial methods of purchasing large quantities by negotiation. This system gave all posts, camps, and stations access to all the nation's markets to purchase goods used in mess halls and sold in commissary stores. The program began operating in May 1941, and by the time Pearl Harbor was attacked in December, there were nearly thirty market centers either planned or already in operation.

In 1941, as it became apparent that the United States would probably enter the war, a great many bases with all their facilities had to be expanded or hurriedly constructed to meet the needs of a huge military force. Everything had a sort of frantic, catch-as-catch-can feel to it, especially in the war's early days when people were still trying to figure out what methods worked on a large scale and what didn't. Many makeshift measures were taken, especially when it came to basic needs like the commissary. Sometimes there was a separate commissary, and sometimes not. At some posts, the same building that housed the PX included either a large exchange grocery section or a commissary.

In 1941, the Army established the Army Exchange Service. It was a separate agency of the War Department's Morale Branch and would run post exchanges worldwide. Such an agency would provide standardiza-

tion and better service. Standardization was a concept the commissaries would only adopt years later. In the meantime, each camp, base, station, and post ran its own commissary in accordance with the wishes of the local commander.

During the war, the Quartermaster Corps helped supply each of the services with items common to all. While the Army Air Corps and Navy maintained their own requisitioning channels and depot systems, they received their supply of common items from Army sources within the theater of operations.

All Army supplies were classified in one of several groups. Class I supplies were articles supplied automatically without requisition at the troop level, since in theory they were consumed daily and universally at a steady rate. Known collectively as "subsistence," Class I supplies at that time included forage for horses as well as food for humans. The unit of measurement was the ration, defined as the allowance of food per day for one man or one animal.

Wartime rationing hit the civilian sector in 1943 (see examples on page 158). Items that were of particular value to the armed forces were butter, cheese, meat, flour, fish, canned goods, sugar, and coffee. Rationing enabled these goods to be provided to America's troops and Allies. None of the rationed goods went to the commissaries; in fact, commissary patrons were hit with the same restrictions on purchases as their civilian counterparts. The upside to this

was that the rations really showed remarkable improvement. During the course of the war, twenty-three rations and ration supplements were developed for use by U.S. forces, though not all were actually put into use

Today, less is known about the overseas commissary stores of World War II than is known about the stores of World War I. World War II commissaries existed in England, and makeshift facilities were set up in mainland Europe, North Africa, and the Pacific Islands. To what extent these overseas stores were merged with exchange operations is currently impossible to say. Most were seat-of-the-pants operations, using whatever buildings or tents that were available, or whatever materials could be





Life at a WARTIME Store

HE CASHIER IN THE PHOTO above, taken in 1943 at Brooks Field, Texas, is Mary Murphy. Forty-five years after the photo was taken, Murphy had the honor of cutting the ribbon at the grand opening of a new store at Brooks Air Force Base. Later, she reminisced about her experiences in the World War II-era store.

The first commissary Murphy recollected at Brooks did not feature self-service. Instead, the customer made a grocery list and gave it to an airman at the front of a warehouse. Murphy remembered, "The airman disappeared into the bowels of the warehouse and returned with our groceries and a bill." Later, with the opening of the commissary in which she cashiered, shopping became self-service. Since the checkout counter was high off the floor, "an airman usually helped the ladies place their basket on the counter." The airman emptied each basket and called out the prices for Murphy to ring up.

Although Murphy's store was much smaller than most modern commissaries, her job was more difficult than those of commissary cashiers today. She was the store's only cashier in 1943, and had to be there every day. It wasn't a comfortable place to work or shop; the lighting was poor, and air conditioning was unavailable. During the summer, the only ventilation was provided by one door and one unblocked window. There was a fan, but it was seldom used because of wartime electricity conservation.

There was no lunch break. Murphy worked from the moment she opened the register until the store closed, taking a break only if there was a lull. She spent 35 of 40 hours per week at her register, usually standing the whole time. The other five hours were spent doing the accounting and clerical work at the end of each day, after the store closed. She turned the day's receipts over to the finance officer, and "There was no margin for error." Ration stamps and paperwork complicated the accounting. "We had to account for ration stamps as carefully as we did the money If we were just a few pennies over at the end of the day, that amount had to be turned in to the finance officer

with thirteen carbon copies of the transaction; if the total was short, the cashier had to pay the shortage. That also required thirteen copies." (Years later, Murphy didn't recall if there really had been thirteen copies, but "so many had to be made we always just said, 'thirteen copies.'")

She recalled that the sales stock was "vastly different from the wonderful variety we have today." It was "limited to bare necessities—issue items and the staples," which included bread, potatoes, onions, fresh eggs, issue butter, cereals, canned fruits, vegetables, and meats. The meats were cured and included whole hams and slabs of bacon. Cheese was cut from a big cheese wheel. There were also soaps, cleaning products, and cigarettes, but there were no frozen foods, soft drinks, fresh vegetables, pet foods, or milk. Since the store had limited stock, customers living on post received extra wartime gasoline rationing coupons, enabling them to drive into town once per week to buy additional groceries.

The commissary was within walking distance of base housing, so there was no carryout or home delivery as provided by some of the larger stores. Since the commissary did not carry milk, a local civilian grocer was permitted to make milk delivery to homes on base. The milkman made daily deliveries to fifteen sets of quarters. A measure of how times have changed is that these customers never locked their doors, and the milkman was expected to enter each home and place the milk right in the refrigerator. The days of such trust are long gone.

All customers needed a commissary card. The cards were issued to active duty personnel and their spouses. There was no single card to cover all their needs, so newly arrived personnel had to acquire separate cards for the commissary, exchange, clinic, and other services.

Eventually, Murphy had to quit her job because she couldn't find adequate day care for her daughter. Murphy and her husband, Paul, who had been stationed at Brooks during the war, retired in San Antonio in 1975. She continued to shop at the stores at Brooks, including the one for which she cut the ribbon, until it closed in 2001.

found to build a temporary commissary structure. These stores' records are scattered among the files of hundreds of different units.

Fortunately, more is known about wartime stores in the United States and U.S. territories. When the war began, commissary facilities' amenities were at a minimum. There was no "typical" commissary. Most were probably much like the facilities at West Point, Fort Monroe, Naval Station San Diego, and Carlisle Barracks.

At that time old cavalry stables and riding halls may have been the most commonly used structures in which to place commissaries. The Army was still phasing out the horse cavalry, and those buildings were becoming available for other uses. Warehouses were also

often converted, as were old hangars that were now too small for the newer generation of aircraft. The floor plans and overall design of the stores were as different from each other as can be imagined.

WARTIME STORES

In 1942 there was a combined post exchange and grocery at Fort Benning, Georgia. It was an old warehouse that had been converted for retail use and operated on a cash-and-carry basis. It was bare-boned and utilitarian, with exposed beam rafters and rows of single-bulb ceiling lights. The only thing obviously state of the art about the place was its folding basket carriers.

Combined stores were fairly common during the war. Cases of beer, prominent in the photo on page 146, show that either the commissary regulations were being pretty liberally interpreted, or the establishment was actually an exchange. A similar building at Camp Normoyle, adjoining Kelly Field in Texas, was clearly marked "Commissary." There was no confusion as to what sort of establishment it was.

Fort Myer, Virginia, held a grand open-



1941: MOBILE COMMISSARY. This 2 1/2-ton truck was constructed at the Quartermaster Motor Repair Depot, Holabird, (later, Fort Holabird), near Baltimore, Maryland. Here, it is shown in use at Camp Lee (later Fort Lee), Virginia. The mobile commissary carried four clerks and a driver. The *Quartermaster Review* said, "In the theater of operations the mobile commissary can be moved, at night, near the front lines to dispense cigarettes and a host of other necessary items to the troops on our first line of defense." The Quartermaster Review

ing of a building the post specifically called "the new commissary" in January 1943. Plans and photos show that it was built inside an existing hay barn. The store had been the brainchild of Col. Max W. Sullivan, the post commander, who presided over the opening ceremonies. One of the honored guests was Katherine Tupper Marshall, wife of Gen. George C. Marshall, the famous wartime chief of staff.

Like the Fort Benning store, the Fort Myer commissary had folding basket carriers like those invented by Sylvan Goldman in 1937. The store also had a large produce section, tile floors, endcaps (product displays at the end of each row of shelving), and numerous brand-name products familiar to shoppers today. There was even a snack counter, a feature that was common in commissaries of the era. Identification cards were checked at the entrance. This store was destined to stay in business until DeCA replaced it in 1994.

At Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, a new commissary measured 20 feet by 162 feet and contained 3,924 square feet of sales area. Like the store at Brooks Field, it was cooled by a single ceiling fan; unlike Brooks, it had no heat.

Meanwhile, the Quartermaster Corps was operating a store at Fort Lewis, Washington. Monthly sales of groceries averaged about \$88,000. Remarkably, the store carried approximately thirty-five hundred customer accounts.

At Camp Machall, near Hoffman, North Carolina, shopping facilities and living quarters were limited, so officers and enlisted men were authorized to live off post. The camp public information office said the Army actually tried to avoid "an extreme demand on civilian enterprise" wherever large numbers of troops were quartered, and the civilian stores supposedly appreciated it. If that statement is true, it would be the first time on

record that civilian merchants would have endorsed commissaries in such a way. Even in small towns, it's unlikely that any civilian enterprise would object to having more business; it's more likely that businesses would take advantage of the chance to expand.

NAVY ACTIVITIES

In 1942, the supply officer of the Atlantic Fleet made a study of the problems of funding and the duplication of efforts by the ships' stores and the ships' service stores afloat. The officer then proposed a plan for merging the two types of stores afloat under the official control of the Navy's Bureau of Supplies and Accounts, and listed the advantages of having one official service store. Consolidation experiments began in 1943 when the newly commissioned cruiser USS Boston, CA69, became the trial ship for the merger of the ships' stores afloat. The recommendations that came out of those experiments eventually went into effect in October 1944.

The merger had long-range effects on the course that ships' stores, Navy exchanges, and Navy commissaries would



1942: FORT BENNING, Georgia. The post exchange-grocery at this post (exterior shown below) was an old warehouse with a newly added entrance and exit. Inside (top photo), note the beer (center) and the folded basket carriers against the third post from the right. DeCA historical file



of Supplies and Accounts, in anticipation of its increasing responsibility, established a ships' division to supervise the stores and to formulate operational policies and procedures. The Navy made the merged ship's store afloat operations mandatory on vessels having supply officers and permissive at all other Navy locations. Navy regulations of 1944 made each ship's service store an autonomous operation, leaving it up to the commanding officer to assure his

store was being operated in accordance with sound business practices. Lacking central guidance, the stores operated with a variety of merchandising practices and other procedures. This state of

affairs was not unusual as it was pretty much the way the Army had always run its commissaries. The postwar world would require something better.

WAR'S END

In the last years of the war, the Army took steps that would profoundly influence its commissary and subsistence operations in the future. The Army's Subsistence Research Laboratory was reorganized and renamed the Subsistence Research and

Development Laboratory. The Quartermaster Subsistence School, which would have direct connections with the commissaries in the years to come, reopened in Chicago. Probably the most immediate, noticeable event was seen at store level, because in 1945, perishable goods were officially placed on the commissary stock list for the first time. Many stores had carried them before, and many posts had grown their own vegetables. Since perishables were officially sanctioned, not only would every store try to procure them, but the Army would make special, official efforts to get them to every store that ordered them.

Commissaries had come a long way from the days when locusts devoured Libbie Custer's garden. Now, as the Cold War began, the commissary benefit was about to get even better.





1925: NAVY CANTEEN. This photograph, taken at Newport, Rhode Island, shows the usual items kept near checkouts: cigarettes, candies, and chewing gum. The Cooperator, Army Times Publications

19 CHRONOLOGY of KEY EVENTS - 45

1920

1920

ARTICLE 868 of Navy regulations abolished "bumboating," but the practice unofficially continued due to the limited stock selection available in ships' stores. A new cooperative, canteen-style operation began to appear: the ships' service stores. Navy regulations sanctioned them in 1923. (NRS News Digest, Apr 1976, p. 4; Navy Commissary Program, p. 2; NEXCOM, 50 Years, p. 2)

1920

Food Marketing: John and Paul Cistrino established the Upham's Corner Market in Dorchester, Massachusetts, the self-proclaimed "Biggest Little Store in the World." It had many of the earmarks of the modern supermarket. (William H. Marnell, Once Upon A Store: A Biography of the World's First Supermarket, pp. 11-40)

1920 - 1940

IN THE PERIOD between World Wars I and II, each installation ordered its own food. Perishables were obtained from local sources, while nonperishables were bought by depots for direct delivery. The Army prescribed the use of a garrison ration

in peacetime. This ration consisted of thirty-nine components, the quality of which was prescribed by federal specifications. (Risch, *QM Corps*, p. 174)

MARCH 6, 1920

COAST GUARD personnel and officers of the Public Health Service were permitted to purchase food from Army, Navy, and Marine Corps commissaries at the same prices charged to men of those services. (U.S. Congress, Act of 6 Mar 1920, 41 Stat. 506 and 507, USC 14:31 and 42:32, Section 1; 2002 Military Law 1929; Porter and Wilson, "Guide," Part II, p. 47)

MARCH 23, 1920

ESTABLISHMENT of the Quartermaster Association. This became the Defense Supply Association (DSA) in 1961, and the American Logistics Association (ALA) in 1972. (Military Market, Aug 1972, p. 9; Exchange & Commissary News, Oct 1995, p. 13)

JUNE 5, 1920

HONORABLY discharged servicemen who were receiving medical treatment from the Public Health Service were allowed to buy subsistence store articles. (U.S. Congress, Act of 5 Jun 1920, 41

1923

Stat. 976, U.S.C. 10:1235; 1985 Mil. Law 1929; Porter and Wilson, "Guide," Part II, p. 47)

AUTUMN 1920

QUARTERMASTER Subsistence School begun in Chicago. (Cassidy, *Products for the Army*, p. 2)

1921

1921

Food Marketing: Product symbol Betty Crocker made her first appearance. Food Product: Peter Paul Halijian invented the Mounds bar. (Elkort, Food, p. 30)

1922

1922

Food Marketing: Founding of *Progressive Grocer Magazine*.

1922

PUBLICATION of War Department Circular No. 75, which showed twice the items authorized for sale as had War Department Bulletin No. 12 in 1914. (Lt. L.C. Webster, "Today and Yesterday," *Quartermaster Review*, Sept - Oct 1925, p. 30)

MARCH 20, 1922

Military Technology: The Navy's first aircraft carrier, USS Langley, was constructed from a modified collier.

JUNE 30, 1922

AN ARMY appropriations act established the right of the War Department to regulate the operation of sales commissaries. Later acts which annually reestablished this power: Army Appropriation Acts of 2 Mar 1923; 7 Jun 1924; 12 Feb 1925; and 15 Apr 1926. (69th Congress, 2nd Session, H.R., Report No. 1737)

JULY 1, 1922

AS OF THIS DATE, legislation enabled commissary sales store expenses to be paid by the patrons through the institution of an overhead charge. Civilian salaries were to be paid out of the surcharge, as they were included in the overhead of the store. In later years, tax dollars paid these salaries. (Webster, "Today and Yesterday," p. 31)

NOVEMBER 1922

A PRICE LIST published for the Quartermaster Corps subsistence sales store at Fort Monroe, Virginia, showed 619 different line items, plus seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables.

The store carried accounts for regular customers. Payments could be made once a month, as per Army Regulation, Paragraph 1240. Daily deliveries were made to customers' homes.

Customers could place only one telephone order per day. All phone orders had to be placed prior to 2 p.m. The store was open for slightly more than thirty-one hours per week. Inventory was taken on the last day of each month.

At this time the surcharge varied by locality. (1922 Price List, Fort Monroe)

1923

SHIPS' SERVICE stores were given official sanction by Navy regulations (Articles 1442 and 1443). Commanding officers supervised the stores under the cognizance of the Bureau of Navigation (later redesignated the Bureau of Naval Personnel). The stores were to be run with non-appropriated funds, and were to use their profits for welfare and recreation of naval personnel. (Hearings, Report of Investigation, 1949, No. 115, p. 3983)

Unfortunately, this created a duplication of effort between ships' stores and ships' service stores, which continued until 1943. (Navy Commissary Program, 2; NRS News Digest, Apr 1976, p. 4)

1924

FEBRUARY 1924

THE NAVY ISSUED a directive to end once and for all sailors' patronage of bumboats. (NRS News Digest, Apr 1976, p. 4)

1925

1925

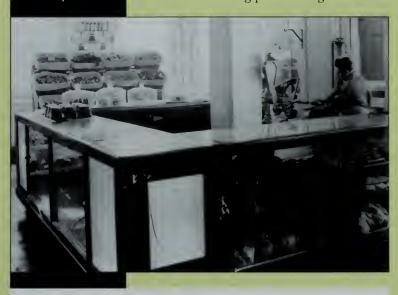
Food Marketing: Establishment of the first fast-food franchise, **A & W Root Beer**.

1925

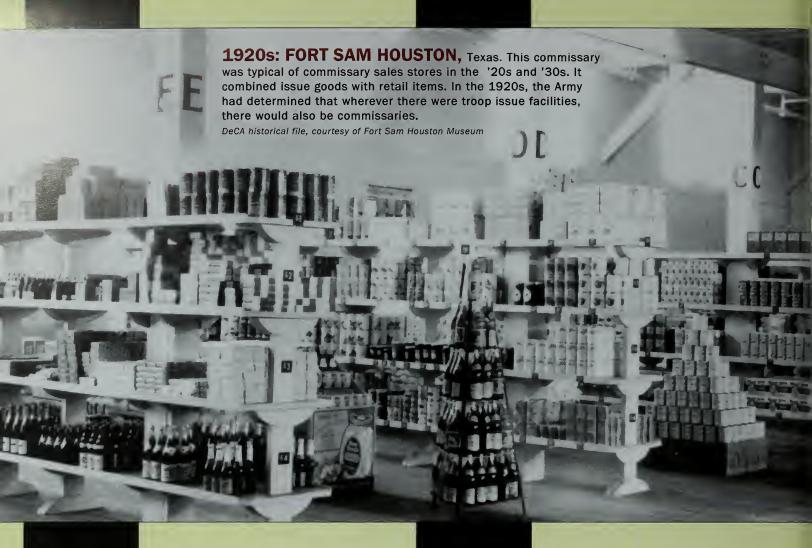
Food Technology: Clarence Birdseye invented a way to quick-freeze food. (Elkort, *Food*, p. 30)

JUNE 15, 1925

AN ORDER allowing post exchanges to collect



1923: NEWPORT, Rhode Island. Meats and pastries were the main products displayed here. Baskets of fruit are in the background. U.S. Navy Historical Center



OCTOBER 1925

debt directly from soldiers' pay, in effect since 1910, was rescinded. This was similar to the way in which sutlers had collected money soldiers owed them. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 134)

AT THIS TIME, the typical Army sales stores were open Monday through Friday, from about 7:30 to 11:30 a.m., and from 1 to 3 p.m. They were closed on Sundays, holidays, and inventory days. Charge accounts could be held by officers and married enlisted men. Telephone orders were offered, but limited.

Writing in *The Quartermaster Review*, Lt. L. C. Webster of the Quartermaster Reserve said:

"... Patrons are not cognizant of the amount of work connected with the operation of the store ... Certain of the services rendered which are unknown to the patron, but which the operation of the store make imperative, for instance, are, the bookkeeping in connection with charge accounts. [In a particular sales store] there are nearly 300 charge accounts each month, each account averaging 42 charge sales slips per month, each day every charge and cash sale slip written that day must be audited ... each and every sale must be written up, whether it be a 5-

cent loaf of bread or an order [listed] on three pages ..." (Webster, "Today and Yesterday," *Quartermaster Review*, Oct 1925, pp. 30-33)

OCT. 28, 1925

Military Politics: Court-martial of Army Gen. Billy Mitchell.

1926

1926

Food Marketing: Founding of Independent Grocers Alliance of America (IGA); first Safeway stores opened.

MARCH 31, 1926

A LETTER from the adjutant general to all corps commanders and the commanding general of the District of Washington directed that by this date, issue commissaries would maintain the sales of ration articles and nonperishables as dictated by local needs and quartermaster sales stores (specializing in non-food items) be closed.

Post exchanges would assume the services rendered by sales stores. Whenever an issue commissary was maintained, there would also be a sales commissary for sale of ration articles and nonperishable articles authorized by the War Department.

MAY 10, 1926

CONGRESS delegated to the secretary of war

authority to prescribe the Philippine ration. (Vice Admiral George C. Dyer, USN (Ret), *Naval Logistics*, 1962, p. II-6; 10 USC 334)

MAY 22, 1926

CONGRESS allowed members of the Lighthouse Service—officers and crews of vessels, light keepers and depot keepers—to buy goods from military commissaries at the same prices charged to members of the military services. (U.S. Congress, Act of 22 May 1926, Section 4, 44 Stat. 626; USC 33: 754a; 2003 Military Law 1929)

JULY 2, 1926

U.S. *Military History:* Congress established the Army Air Corps.

1927

Food Marketing: Penn Fruit Co, later known as **Penn Foods**, opened its first store.

1927

1927

Military Technology: Completion of the Navy's first true aircraft carriers, USS Lexington and USS Saratoga.

1927

THE ARMY'S daily ration was improving. It now consisted of 18 oz. beef (turkey on Thanksgiving and Christmas); 5 oz. onion; 12 oz. apple; 1.75 oz. butter; .25 oz. oleomargarine; .57 oz. cheese; .08 gills pickle and cucumber; .08 gills vinegar; 2 oz. canned tomatoes; 3 oz. cocoa; .014 oz. cinnamon; .08 oz. baking powder; .014 oz. flavoring extract; .04 oz. black pepper; .5 oz. jam; .32 oz. lard; .32 oz. lard substitute; 1.2 oz. dry beans; .02 oz. evaporated milk; 4 oz. bacon; 2.9 oz. dried peaches; 1.5 oz. ground coffee; 16 oz. potatoes; 4 oz. sugar; and 1 lb. flour.

JAN. 10, 1927

THE HOUSE Committee on Military Affairs recommended passage of H.R. 15661, "A bill to regulate the operation of sales commissaries and other utilities of the War Department selling services or supplies." The intent was to establish commissaries permanently, eliminating the need for annual legislation to renew them. This would make them less vulnerable to budget fluctuations and constraints. (69th Congress, 2nd Session, H.R., Report No. 1737)

MAY 10, 1927

SEVEN CIVILIAN store owners petitioned against the community store at the Naval Surface Warfare Center at Dahlgren, Virginia, saying that the base store was unfairly competing with them.

Conducting an investigation, the chief of the Navy's Bureau of Ordnance, Adm. C. C. Bloch,

found that the store did not normally do business with civilians, and only 1 percent of its monthly sales went to local civilians. Such sales were more a matter of good public relations than anything else, since these customers had nowhere else to shop.

The admiral added that five of the seven civilian stores had not even been established before the base opened, that only two of the stores were near the base, and that all of the merchants had benefited from the base. He rejected the petition. (Source: Dahlgren papers, especially [with attachments] Rear Admiral C. C. Bloch, USN, Chief of the Bureau of Ordnance, to Hon. R. Walton Moore, House of Representatives, undated. Copy in DeCA historical file)

MAY 20-21, 1927

Technology: Charles A. Lindbergh flew solo, nonstop, from New York to Paris.

SUMMER 1927

Social History & Food Product: George Herman "Babe" Ruth hit sixty home runs for the New York Yankees. Contrary to popular belief, the Baby Ruth candy bar was not named for him; it had been named decades earlier for the infant daughter of President Grover Cleveland, by candymaker Otto Schnering. (Elkort, Food, p. 30)

OCTOBER -DECEMBER 1927 THE PRICE LIST from the U.S. Navy commissary store at Naval Station San Diego, California, typified differences between the Navy and Army commissary sales stores, as well as the close—almost symbiotic—relationship between the Navy's exchanges and commissaries.

The San Diego store sold the same items as Army stores of this era, but also sold beer, lubricating oil, auto tires and tubes, and a large assortment of pens, pencils, smoking pipes, stationery, and miscellaneous goods. The price list also advertised local stores that would give discounts to shoppers if they presented a commissary permit card or an ID card issued by the commissary.

The San Diego store carried 810 different line items, of which only 390 were grocery products.

The store was open thirty-one and a half hours per week. Orders were picked up until 5 p.m. Deliveries cost \$1 per month and could be made three days per week. Orders could be phoned in or dropped off in person. (Price List, 1 Oct to 31 Dec 1927, U.S. Navy Commissary Store, San Diego, Calif.)

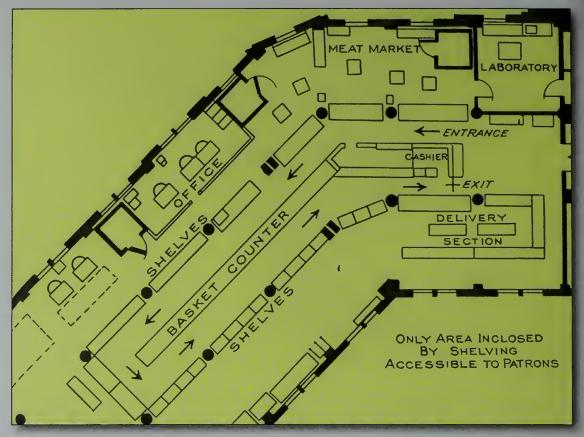
1929

Food Marketing: In Paris, Frenchman Isaac

1930s: WEST POINT,

New York. Many of the features of modern stores have their origins in the trial-and-error practices and store layouts of the 1930s. A clerk and a cashier (bottom right) at the West Point, New York, commissary take care of store business at the sole checkout stand. Cigarettes (bottom left) were already in an employee-assisted, restricted access rack. Note the counter or "slide" for handbaskets in the foreground. The goods were removed from the basket and placed onto the checkout counter for price totaling.

Quartermaster Review







Carasso began selling yogurt. He named his product **Danone** after his son, Daniel. (Elkort, *Food*, p. 87)

Food Marketing: When the stock market crash of October 28-29, 1929, set off the Great Depression, it also changed the food retailing industry. Adversity drove the market. People with part-time jobs—such as a clerk in a grocery market—found themselves being fired or laid off. The grocers, who could no longer afford to pay a lot of clerks, switched to self-service stores. (David B. Sicilia, "Supermarket Sweep," in Audacity, the Magazine of Business History, Spring 1997, pp. 10-19)

1932

1930

Food Technology: Frozen vegetables were new to the market.

Food Marketing: King Kullen, perhaps the first true supermarket, opened in New Jersey. Its

appeal was based on huge savings—a pitch that brought immediate attention in the early days of the Great Depression. A similar self-service market in Jamaica, New York, also laid claim to being the first supermarket. Meanwhile, Kroger opened its "store of the future" in Cincinnati, Ohio.

1932

A REPORT by the Naval Affairs Committee erroneously stated: "Existing Army and Navy Exchanges and Commissaries had their origin in the canteens established to meet the personal and other requirements of enlisted men because of the isolation and inaccessibility of certain Army posts principally in the unsettled areas of the West, and because of the long voyages in past years of battleships and other fighting craft." (Bowers Study, Appendix 1-B, p. 2 of 7)

This statement was made by a naval officer who was probably misinformed as to the true origins of the Army commissaries. He ignored the origins of commissaries with the sutlers, post

1929

1930

traders, and bumboats, the high prices charged by these merchants, and the fact that the first Army stores had been established long before canteens had ever existed.

The statement is extremely significant because it added to the perception that Army commissaries had originally been meant only for isolated, remote posts. In fact, it seems to have been the source of erroneous statements made by members of Congress and printed repetitively in various reports ever since.

Food Marketing: Several supermarket chains opened: the first Big Bear at a former Buick plant in New Jersey; Standard in Oklahoma; and Alpha-Beta wholesale-retail market in California. Alpha-Beta took its name from the short-lived practice—like that demonstrated at Carlisle Barracks in 1937—of shelving its goods alphabetically. (McAusland, 50 Years of Progress, pp. 18-22)

Wilitary Politics: A large group of World War I veterans called the "Bonus Army" descended on Washington, D.C., demanding an advance payment of their bonus. Demand was sparked by the Great Depression and widespread unemployment. They failed in their bid, and the Army was ordered to expel them from the nation's capital using tanks, gas, and bayonet. This use of force against the veterans did not set well with the country.

1933

Food Marketing: The first known use of the term "supermarket" in a chain name was by Albers Super Market in Cincinnati. Its practice of keeping the stores open for evening shopping initially drew a great deal of opposition. Meanwhile, the first Food Fair opened in Pennsylvania. (McAusland, 50 Years, p. 19)

New Food Product: Candy maker **Franklin Mars** marketed his **Snickers Bar.** The new soft drink **7-Up** hit the market. (Elkort, *Food*, p. 31)

Military Technology: Popular Science Magazine featured a "flying wing" aircraft, eleven years before the first such aircraft flew. The first flying wings were in Germany, where the Nazis developed several models, including a transatlantic bomber. Three years later the United States had several experimental models. But it wouldn't be until 1988 that the United States produced the B-2 "Stealth" flying-wing bomber as an operational aircraft.

1933

Food Marketing: Big Bear opened its first Ohio store in Columbus. (McAusland, 50 Years, p. 19)

DECEMBER 1933

MAY 1934

THE PRICE LIST for the sales commissary at Fort Benning, Georgia, showed 493 line items. (Price list, Fort Benning; *The Cooperator*, Oct 1952)

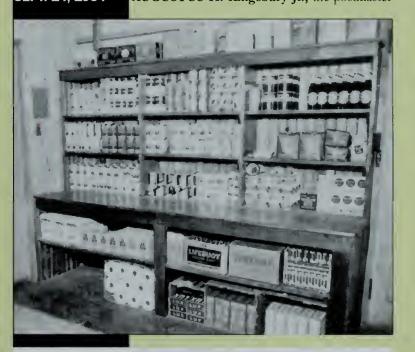
1934

Food Technology: Three hundred million tons of soil blew away during the "Black Blizzard" in the **Dust Bowl** of the Great Plains, due in part to improper plowing and faulty planting.

AS OF THIS YEAR, there were 137 Army commissaries, worldwide. There were 113 stores in the United States, seven in Alaska and Hawaii, eight in China and the Philippines, seven in Panama, and two in Puerto Rico. (*Quartermaster Review*, Sept - Oct 1934)

AN EXAMPLE of the divergence between commissary stores: While Fort Benning had had 493 line items on its shelves the previous year, the 1934 price list for the sales and issue commissary at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, listed only 248. (1934 price list, Fort Sill)

SEPT. 14, 1934 AUGUSTUS H. Kingsbury Jr., the postmaster



1930s: STATE OF THE ART. Commissaries such as this one at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania (pictured here), and at West Point, New York, were considered modern for the 1930s. In some places, sales in any one visit were limited to thirteen items—only because there were exactly thirteen lines on a sales ticket. This store was almost entirely a dry goods store. Before 1939, most commissary sales stores did not have large meat or produce departments. Quartermaster Review

1932

MAY 29, 1932

1933

1933

at Haines, Alaska, applied for shopping privileges for himself and his family at the commissary at Chilkoot Barracks, citing the cost of living and his low salary as reasons for making the application.

Secretary of War George Dern denied the request. In a letter dated November 28, 1934, Dern wrote, "Limited Army facilities and the attitude of local merchants have made it necessary to limit the exercise of this authority [to grant shopping privileges] to those cases where ... Army commissaries were the only practical source of supply ... it is not apparent that this isolated condition exists." (Source: Letters contained in Binder 228-08, "Sales Commissaries—Laws Applicable, Sales Privileges to, Closing of Sales Stores, Funds Derived From," in DeCA historical file)

1936

THE ARMY Subsistence Research Laboratory in Chicago began doing the work formerly done by the Subsistence School, which moved to Philadelphia. The Research Lab would help develop the rations that became famous during World War II: C, D, and K rations; A and B Field Rations; the 10-in-1 ration; the combat lunch; and for aviators, the Life Raft and Bail-Out rations. (Dickson, Chow pp. 48-57; Erna Risch, The Quartermaster Corps: Organization, Supply and Services, 1953, pp. 175-76; also, see Appendices)

New Food Products: Introduction of the vitamin pill. Also, the Hormel company first marketed **Spam**, a canned combination of pork shoulder and ham that later became a staple in military mess halls and field kitchens. (Dickson, *Chow* p. 60)

Food Business & Technology: Inspired by the simplicity of a wooden folding chair, Sylvan Goldman, owner of Standard and Humpty-Dumpty grocery stores in Oklahoma City, conceptualized the first shopping cart. Fred Young, a maintenance man with the Standard-Humpty Dumpty chain, helped him build the prototype. They experimented with the carts for months before introducing the cart to the public [see June 4, 1937]. (Terry T. Wilson, The Cart that Changed the World, esp. pp. 79-85; Elkort, Food, p. 31)

1937

THE COMMISSARY at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, was experimenting with the selfservice concept. Self-service was becoming com-



monplace at larger commissaries, but smaller stores such as the one at Carlisle Barracks had not yet adopted the method. Because shopping carts were not yet widespread, the Carlisle store devised a track or slide which ran the length of the store aisles upon which patrons would rest their handbaskets, similar to the method used at West Point [see page 152]. (Capt. Harry G. Dowdall, QMC, "A Self-Service Commissary," The Quartermaster Review, Jan-Feb 1938, pp. 13-18, 76)

APRIL 14, 1937

PASSAGE of an amendment to the Act of March 3, 1909, authorized the Navy to again extend commissary store privileges to officers and enlisted men of the Coast Guard, as well as to widows of Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard

FEBRUARY 1937

1936

1936



personnel, and to U.S. Foreign Service personnel at naval stations outside the United States and Alaska. These privileges were not yet extended to the widows of Army or Army Air Corps personnel. (Office of Management and Budget, "Operational Alternatives," Jan 1975, p. 89; *Life, Bicentennial Issue*, "100 Events that Shaped America," p. 11; 75th Congress, Chapter 78, 1st Session, S. 1133)

JUNE 4, 1937

Food Business, Food Technology, & Customer Psychology: Sylvan Goldman put the first shopping cart to practical use in his stores. It was known as the folding basket carrier since it carried two removable handbaskets and folded for storage. The two baskets increased the amount of goods a customer could carry; they

could push two on the carrier and still carry one by hand. (Wilson, *Cart*, 79-88; Elkort, *Food*, p. 31)

AUGUST 1937

Food Business, Food Technology, Customer & Merchant Psychology: Sylvan Goldman took his folding basket carrier invention to the Super Market Institute in New York City, where he found himself a partner, Kurt Schweitzer. After some initial resistance from people who worried that children would get hurt using the carts, Goldman made a film demonstrating the carts. Schweitzer used the film to show how the cart worked—and sales soared. (Wilson, Cart, pp. 88-92)

1938

JAN. 18, 1938

State of the Commissaries: The Fort Myer, Virginia, commissary had a single checkout station. It also featured real wood counters and railings and two screen doors, one for entry, one for exiting. (National Archives photo collection, No. NA38-400 through NA38-403. The photos have been renumbered several times. Latest known numbering is 111SC-488016 through 111SC-488019)

MARCH 1938

THE SALES commissary at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, consisted of two aisles, a meat market, one cashier, and a delivery section. Like the Carlisle Barracks store, it used a slide for handbaskets. The store's average monthly business was \$36,000, and it carried 626 charge accounts. (Lt. Col. Robert M. Littlejohn and Capt. Ewing H. France, "Quartermaster Sales Store and Commissary at West Point," in *Quartermaster Review*, Mar - Apr 1938)

APRIL 28, 1939

EXECUTIVE ORDER No. 8009 directed the Veterans Administration to enforce, monitor, and review the laws governing Army and Army Air Corps disabled, non-regular Army officers. These officers were kept off the list of Army retirees, which prevented them or their widows from being granted commissary privileges. The Navy and Marines, however, granted such privileges to their disabled officers and their widows. (Hearings, Report of Investigation, 1949, No. 115, p. 3989)

1939

JUNE 30, 1939

Lighthouses & the Coast Guard: Effective this date, Reorganization Order No. 11, issued by President Franklin Roosevelt, transferred the Bureau of Lighthouses and its functions from the Department of Commerce to the Coast Guard,

1940s: SAN DIEGO, California. This commissary credit permit card allowed the bearer to buy groceries "for the immediate members of your family only." It listed the military member's name as well as that of his spouse, and it was her personal card, as shown by her signature. It expired on January 1, 1942, necessitating a renewal for continued shopping privileges.

Donated by Ann Price, Imperial Beach commissary

COMMISSARY STORE CREDIT 11018 PERMIT. SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA EXPIRES Present this eard when purchasing. You are authorized to make purchases for the immediate members of your family only. H STYLES CTC USN 11018 MARY 1-1-42 McDOUGAL COULBOURN LIEUT. COMBR. (Sel U.S.N HOLDER SIGN HERE. OFFICER IN CHARGE

within the Department of the Treasury. This action confirmed that taken on May 22, 1926, that enabled people employed by the Lighthouse Service as of this date to be eligible for the commissary benefit upon retirement. (Bell, Secretaries of War, pp. 272-73; Title 33, U.S. Code, Section 754a, ref. (c), and 868a, ref.(c); Porter & Wilson in Quartermaster Review, "Guide for Sales Officers"; see also entry for May 22, 1926)

SEPTEMBER 1939 BY THIS TIME, the Subsistence Research Laboratory had developed four field rations: A, B, C, and D. (Risch, QM Corps, p. 175)

SEPT. 1, 1939

World History: Germany attacks Poland. By September 3, both Great Britain and France had declared war on Germany.

DECEMBER 1939

MANY COMMISSARIES did not have large meat markets or produce departments. In some places, sales were limited to thirteen items because there were only thirteen lines on a sales ticket. In most places, a clerk took the patron's list and retrieved the items. (Military Market, Oct 1955, p. 28)

7540

1940

Food Business Technology: Sylvan Goldman added a baby seat to his basket carrier. (Wilson, Cart, p. 103)

JULY 10, 1940

U.S. Military History: Establishment of the U.S. Armored Forces.

1.941

1941

1941

DEVELOPMENT of the master menu, prepared for the feeding of soldiers who were not actually in combat. (Dickson, Chow, p. 55)

New Food Product: Mars, Inc., developed

M&Ms, said to "melt in your mouth, not in your hand," as a special candy for soldiers in combat. (Elkort, The Secret Life of Food, p. 31)

MARCH 19, 1941

ORIGINAL provisions were made for the creation of market centers, which would use commercial methods of purchasing large quantities, and give the military access to all the nation's markets. By December 7, 1941, there were thirty centers either planned or in operation. (Risch, QM Corps, p. 39; Hucles, Haversack, p. 135)

JUNE 6, 1941

ESTABLISHMENT of the Army Exchange Service to run post exchanges worldwide. It was a separate agency of the War Department's Morale Branch. (HASC No. 91-77, 12383; Army Regulation 210-65)

DEC. 7, 1941

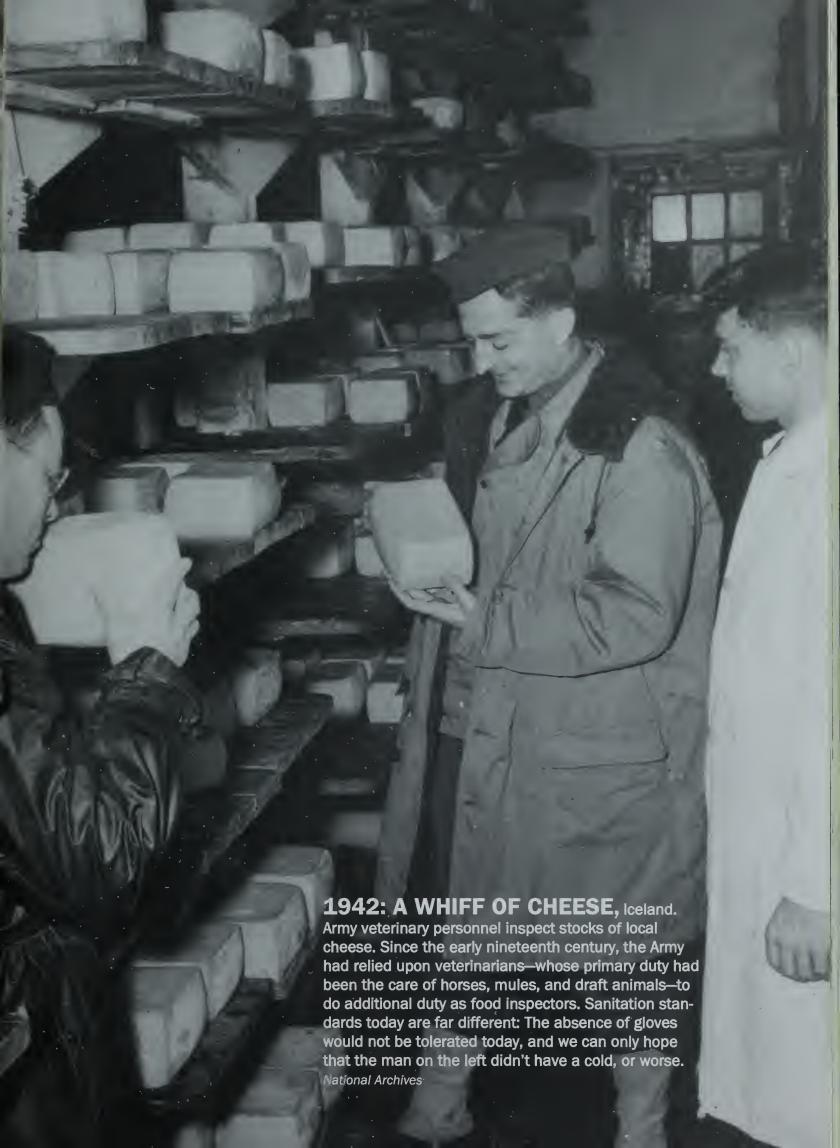
U.S. Military History: Japanese launched surprise attack at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. On Sunday at 8 a.m., more than 350 Japanese planes from a carrier task force attacked the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, and airfields at Kaneohe, Ford Island, Hickam, Bellows, Wheeler and Ewa. More than 2,300 U.S. service members were killed (1,102 alone from the USS. Arizona), twelve ships sunk or beached, and 164 planes destroyed. The Japanese lost twenty-nine planes during the attack.

DECEMBER 1941 -SEPTEMBER 1945

AMERICAN involvement in World War II. The Quartermaster Corps was one of seven technical services. The Army's logistical system in the Mediterranean and European Theaters was considered basic, and the Army Air Corps and Navy

were supplied with items common to the three

Army supplies were classified in one of several groups. Known collectively as "subsistence," they included food for humans and forage for ani-







BETTER FIELD RATIONS. C-rations (left photo) were probably the most common type of food served to soldiers in the field during World War II. K-rations (below) provided cigarettes, which remained a feature of Army rations into the 1980s. U.S. Army p. o



mals. (Ross & Romanus, The Quartermaster Corps: Operations in the War Against Germany, pp. 6-7)

Throughout the war, twenty-three different U.S. rations and ration supplements were developed. (Goins, *Army Rations*, p. 34; *Operational Rations*, pp. 6, 34-43; Ross & Romanus, *QM Corps Operations*, pp. 7-8; *Science News Letter*, 4 Aug 1945)

1942

FEB. 16, 1942

State of the Commissaries: The post exchange and grocery at Fort Benning, Georgia, was located near the main theater, and provided a means for officers and men located in that area to obtain groceries and meats at reasonable prices. It was operated on a cash-and-carry basis. The store was a warehouse, converted for retail use. A photograph (page 146) shows only female customers, proving spouses could patronize the store. Cases of beer, prominent in the photograph's center foreground, show that either the commissary regulations were being liberally interpreted, or the exchange regulation was used to justify the stock list. (National Archives, U.S. Army Signal Corps Photographs No. SC 132137 and SC132138, originally numbered 161SC-42-1060 and 161SC-42-1062)

APRIL 1942

THE SUPPLY officer of the Atlantic Fleet studied the problems of funding and duplication of efforts by the ships' stores and the ships' service stores afloat. (*NRS News Digest*, Apr 1976, p. 5) He proposed merging the two stores afloat under the control of the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts. The plan went into effect in October 1944. (Navy Commissary Program, p. 02; *NRS News Digest*, Apr 1976, p. 5)

JULY 30, 1942

U.S. *Military History:* The Navy's **WAVES** (Women Approved for Voluntary Emergency Service) was established.

OCT. 7, 1942

1943

THE COMMISSARY at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, was completed. This facility measured 20 feet by 162 feet and contained 3,924 square feet of sales area. (DeCA historical photofile; a photograph of the store is on page 42)

1943

Food, War, & Politics: Wartime rationing hit butter, cheese, meat, flour, fish, canned goods, sugar, and coffee.

1943 Food Business & War: George L. Harwell and his partners convinced the federal govern-

ment to let them build a rice conversion plant despite wartime material shortages and consequent building restrictions. In 1943 they shipped out their first carloads of converted brand rice to an Army quartermaster depot. Converted rice was the result of a new steeping and steaming



1942: MAYPORT, Florida. Military staff of the Naval Station Mayport store, with the officer-in-charge front and center. The only man in the photo whose name is currently known is James Menge, standing at far left. Photo courtesy Menge family, Richard Matthews, and Richard Nornhold

History of American Military Commissaries

process developed in England. During the war, the rice was produced only for the military, but in 1946 it was put on the consumer market. Named after an actual Houston farmer who was known for producing quality rice, it was called "Uncle Ben's Converted Rice." (*Grit*, 1 Aug 1993)

FOR THE FIRST time, wives of combat troops received permission to shop in all commissaries. Before, this had been done on a post-by-post basis. Husbands of female military members also received shopping privileges. Female service members belonged to the Army's WACs (Women's Auxiliary Corps), the Navy's WAVES (Women Approved Voluntary Emergency Service), SPARS (Coast Guard Women's Reserve; acronym comes from Coast Guard motto Semper Paratus, "Always Ready"), WASPS (Women's Air Service Pilots), and Women Marines.

JAN. 18, 1943

State of Commissaries: Grand opening of the new commissary at Fort Myer, Virginia: Built inside an old barn, it had a large produce section, tile floors, endcaps, and many brand-name products. It also had a snack counter, a feature that was common in commissaries of the era. (National Archives, U.S. Army Signal Corps photo collection, photos No. 111SC-162428 through 162436; commissary blueprints, 1942-43, from Fort Myer engineers' records)

JUNE 1943

NEWLY COMMISSIONED cruiser USS Boston became the trial ship for the merger of the ships' stores afloat.

(Navy Commissary Program, p. 2; NRS News Digest, Apr 1976, p. 5)

SEPT. 6, 1943

A PHOTOGRAPH taken inside the commissary at Camp Machall, North Carolina, bears the following caption: "Officers and enlisted men authorized to live off the post, and their wives, take advantage of the lower prices offered by the [Quartermaster] Sales Store at Camp Machall, North Carolina. The Army, to a large extent, avoided an extreme demand on civilian enterprise in areas where large numbers of troops are



developed for preparing food during long-distance flights at high altitudes. The apparatus was first used in the B-29 bomber. (*Science News Letter*, 11 Nov 1944)

FEBRUARY 1944

THE ARMY'S Subsistence Research Labora-



tory was reorganized and renamed the Subsistence Research and Development Laboratory. (Risch, *QM Corps*, p. 175)

JUNE 6, 1944

Military History: D-Day: The invasion of Normandy. Hundreds of thousands of Allied troops came ashore to begin the liberation of France. By August 25, Paris would be a free city.

AUG. 1, 1944

THE BUREAU of Supplies and Accounts, in anticipation of its increasing responsibility, established the ships' stores division. (NRS)

News Digest, Apr 1976, p. 5)

THE NAVY made the merged ships' stores afloat operations mandatory on vessels having supply officers and permissive at all other Navy locations. Navy regulations of 1944 made each ship's service store an autonomous operation, leaving it up to the commanding officer to assure his store was being operated in accordance with sound business practice. But without any central guidance, there was a wide disparity between the various stores in merchandising practices and other procedures. (*Navy Commissary Program*, p. 2;

DEC. 4, 1944

OCTOBER 1944

THE QUARTERMASTER Subsistence School reopened in Chicago. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 135)

NRS News Digest, Apr 1976, p. 6)

1945

1945

State of the Commissaries: The Fort Lewis, Washington, commissary was operated by the Quartermaster Corps. Monthly sales of groceries averaged \$88,000; approximately thirty-five hundred customer accounts were carried. "Not operated for profit, the financial set-up of these commissary sales stores of the Quartermaster Corps is computed on a basis of payment of overhead only," or on an "at cost," non-profit basis as had been the case since 1867. (National Archives, U.S. Army Signal Corps Photo No. SC-0130597)

1945

PERISHABLE goods were placed on the commissary stock list for the first time, though many stores had been selling them for years.

MAY 7, 1945

World Events: Germany surrendered to the Allies. President Harry S. Truman declared May 8 to be VE Day (Victory in Europe Day).

AUG. 6 and 9, 1945 **U.S.** *Military History:* Atomic bombs were dropped on the Japanese cities of **Hiroshima** and **Nagasaki**. Within days the Japanese agreed to surrender, ending World War II.

AUG. 15, 1945

World Events: VJ Day (Victory over Japan). The Japanese agreed to surrender. On September 2 in Tokyo Bay aboard the USS Missouri, Gen. Douglas MacArthur accepted the Japanese surrender, ending World War II. The war would go down in history as the most costly in human suffering, with more than fifty million deaths.

COMMISSARY Then and Mow CUSTOMERS

HAT WAS LIMITED to officers before 1867 is now open to enlisted people, retirees, reservists, members of the National Guard, and their families. It is their tastes and preferences that have dictated what the commissaries look like and what they sell.

To understand how important they consider the benefit to be, no words are necessary; it is enough to simply see a customer with several children in tow, somehow navigating the aisles with two grocery carts, lingering over special sale items, trying new products, checking coupons, using a calculator to add up the bill before reaching the checkout.

It has always been that way. In fact, other than the increase in the types of eligible shoppers, little has really changed about commissary customers other than the brand names of products they expect to see on the shelves, the fashions in which they dress, and the fact that today there are many more children in the stores than once was the case. The growing number of military families gradually brought an end to the old policy of "no children allowed."



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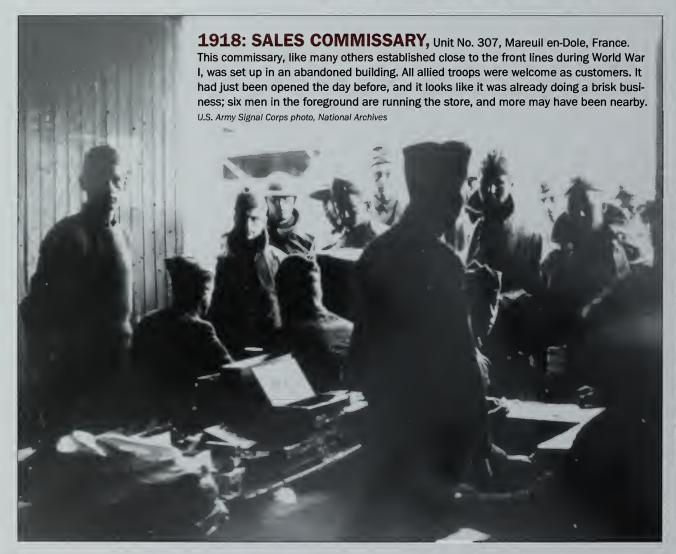
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▲ 1944: WAVES. The national war effort during World War II prompted the services to accept female volunteers—and they became eligible commissary shoppers. U.S. Navy Historical Center





1967: ANKARA, Turkey. Parents pour a glass of fresh milk for their daughter inside the Ankara commissary. This was a publicity photo for a ninety-day test program for daily deliveries of 407 quarts of fresh milk. The milk was obtained from a Turkish state farm meeting U.S. standards, and was processed by a contractor following American specifications. The poster on the cooler says the finished product was "Pasteurized, Homogenized, [and] Vitamin D fortified." The program exemplifies the special concerns and needs of families living overseas at the far end of a long supply pipeline.

DeCA historical file, courtesy Rick Wilson, DeCA/AC



▶ 1955: ANDERSEN Air Force Base, Guam. A customer chooses from a large variety of canned goods at the new facility. Her cart and the shelf contain items as popular today as they were in the 1950s.



▲ 1961: SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico. Patrons use carts that "nested" together for storage. These carts also had safety seats for children. These customers seemed pleased with their shopping experience—due, no doubt, to commissaries becoming more like civilian stores.



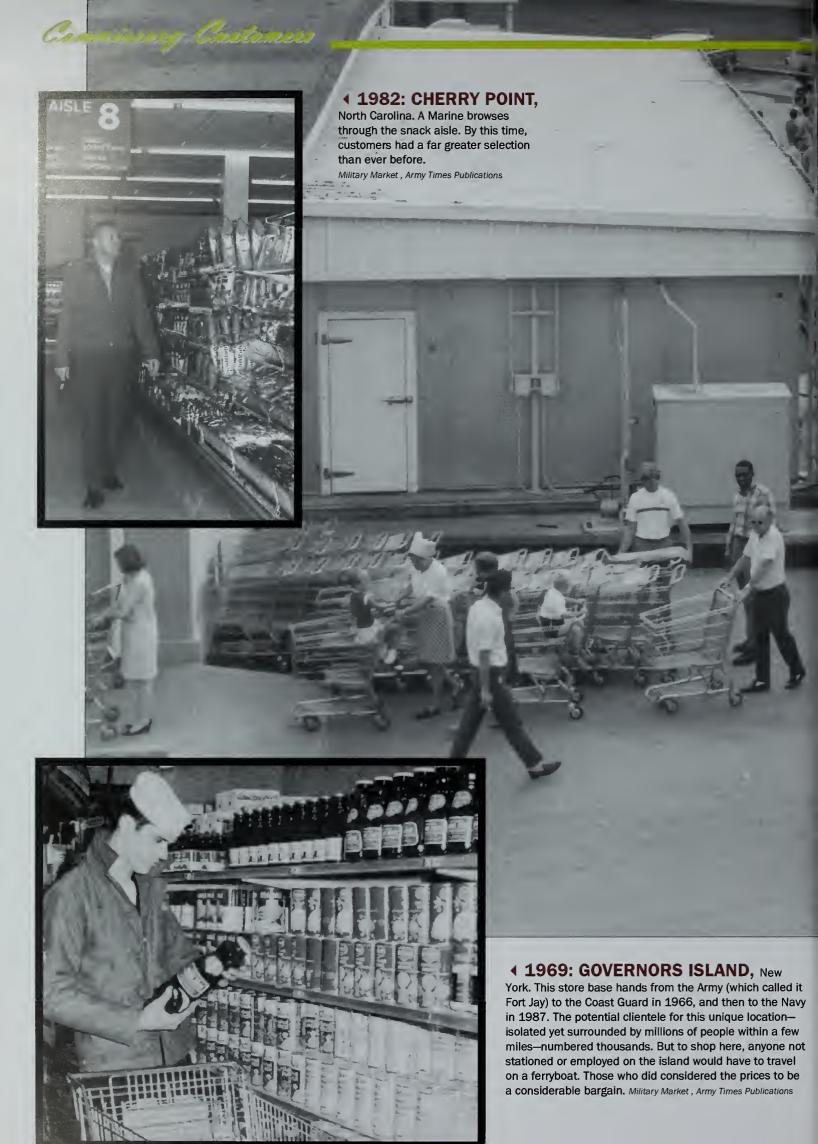
▲ 1957: FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kansas, 1957. Then, as now, children loved to break safety rules by climbing onto carts, and even the toughest sergeants were powerless to stop them.



▲ 1960: JACKSONVILLE, Florida. A commissary employee at Naval Air Station Jacksonville hands a customer a sixpack carrier of half-gallon milk cartons. The carriers were intended to save space, protect the cartons, make them easier to handle, and keep the milk chilled longer. Although the weight of three gallons of milk precluded the carriers from gaining widespread popularity, they were readily accepted by parents with several children and remained in use at Jacksonville for at least seven years.



▲ 1969: POINT MUGU, California. Recently renovated, the Naval Air Station commissary had been carefully reconfigured to provide more shelf space while also providing wider aisles.







▲ 1977:MEMPHIS,

Tennessee. A customer checks the meats in an open "coffin case" at Naval Support Activity Memphis. These refrigerated units started becoming popular in the 1950s and are still standard equipment today.

Military Market, Army Times Publications

1968: CHARLESTON

Air Force Base, South Carolina. A line of shoppers winds its way around the outside of the store. At least there seem to have been plenty of carts! DeCA historical file

▶ 1971: WALTER REED

Army Medical Center, Maryland. Long lines and overflowing shopping carts confirm the importance of the commissary benefit to these patrons.

Military Market , Army Times Publications



▶ 1980s: BROOKS

Air Force Base, Texas. A shopper heads to the parking lot after loading up on groceries, followed by a bagger working for tips.

AFCOMS photo, DeCA historical file



▶ 1988: LACKLAND

Air Force Base, Texas. Thanks to diligent coupon-clipping, customer Estrella Dietz saved \$119—over one-sixth of her total bill—on five cartloads of groceries. Commissaries began accepting coupons in the 1970s, allowing customers to increase their savings.

DeCA historical file: AFCOMS photo by A1C Christopher Haug





Cammissary Custamers



◆ 1996: OCEANA,

Virginia. The majority of young commissary shoppers are women, but older customers are frequently men. Here at Naval Air Station Oceana, Navy retiree Neil Neilsen takes a break to avoid the crowd in the meat department.

DeCA photo: Pete Skirbunt



▶ 2004: ROTA, Spain. Marines tour the Naval Station Rota commissary during Commissary Awareness Month and sample sweets from the bakery.

DeCA photo: Kassie Gates



▲ 2003: CHARLESTON Air Force Base, South Carolina. A young Air Force family enjoys fruit juice samples at the grand opening on June 13.

DeCA photo: Cherie Huntington



▶ 2005: FORT MYER,

Virginia. Seven-year-old Herbert Goldson of Washington, D.C. selects a plastic egg from the basket during the commissary's "Easter Eggs-travaganza" give-away on March 19. Jeanette Riddick, grocery manager, had a great time as the Easter Bunny. Inside each egg was a slip naming the child's prize. The commissary's vendors gave away plenty of goodies, including 150 chocolate bunnies.

U.S. Army photo: Sgt. Chuck Wagner, Fort Myer public affairs office



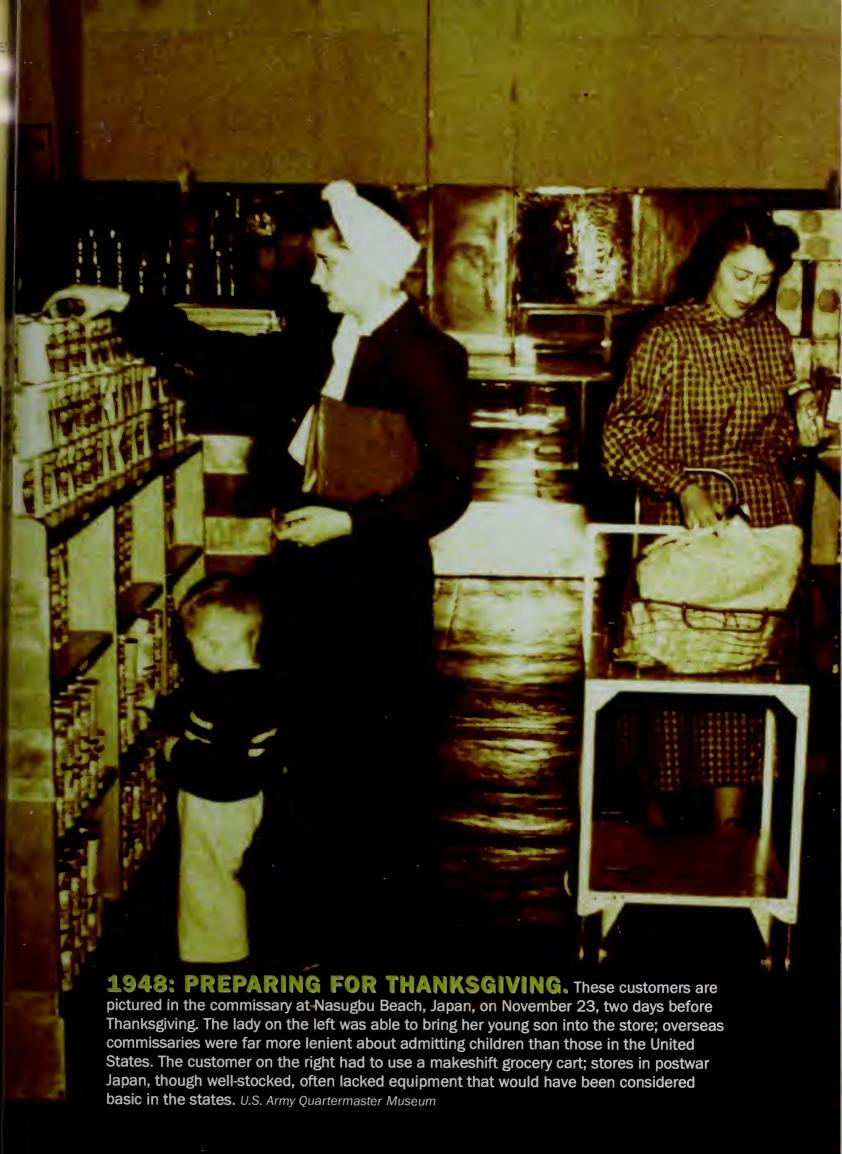


7

OVERSEAS OCCUPATION 1945 - 1953 AND THE EMBATTLED BENEFIT

URING AND AFTER WORLD WAR II, the commissary benefit spread to dozens of installations at home and to hundreds of locations overseas. Commissaries became available to thousands of people who, just a few years earlier, had never had any intention of wearing a military uniform. It also served many more military families than it had before the war. Ultimately, the benefit not only began to change appreciably, it became more important than anyone could have ever anticipated.

At store level, commissaries had always followed the example of the civilian retail grocery industry. What was surprising after the war was not that sweeping changes happened, but the speed with which they began to occur. Several forces wrought these changes: the war, the Cold War that followed, and postwar prosperity in the United States.



ORIGINS OF THE SMALL REGULAR ARMY

Today, there are few people alive who can remember a time in which America had a small army and relied heavily upon volunteer "citizen soldiers" in times of war. The general concept was—and it had been used in every war since the Revolution—that in time of war, citizens would put down the tools of their trade and take up muskets to defend the country. Once the emergency was over, they would return to their civilian pursuits.

This tradition originated in the earliest days of English colonization, when the first settlers were entirely on their own, fending for themselves in a hostile wilderness with no help from the

mother country. They constructed their own homes and defenses, created and elected their own governments, formulated their own laws, and defended themselves with their own guns. Each colony eventually created a regulated militia in which all able-bodied men participated.

There was no standing army, because colonists held a deep aversion to a permanent, professional force of soldiers. Many colonists had left their homelands because of civil or religious strife, so they feared, despised, and distrusted armies in the service of a king, a powerful individual, or a political or religious faction. Farmers, merchants, religious groups, adventurers, refugees, slaves, indentured servants, and convicts-all had witnessed firsthand the dangers posed by armed forces wielded by men who were ambitious, ruthless, and corrupt. The colonists perceived professional armies as being dangerous to individual rights, and they passed this conviction down to succeeding generations of Americans.

Necessity forced the colonists to periodically tolerate such armies from 1689 to 1763, during a series of vicious wars against the French and their native allies. Britain defended its colonies by using its regulars, supplemented by the colonial mili-



1946: TOKYO GRAND OPENING. American Army officers cut the ribbon to open the downtown Tokyo quartermaster commissary. Within ten months of the Japanese surrender at the end of World War II, American troops in Japan were allowed to have their families join them at bases there. (See page 37 for a picture of the store's exterior.) U.S. Army Quartermaster Museum

tia. As long as a war was ongoing, the colonists endured—even welcomed—the soldiers' presence. When the war ended, the colonists expected the king's men to leave. But in 1763, British troops remained in America to enforce unpopular policies. The soldiers' presence, and the policies they enforced, caused mistrust, resentment, and anger among the colonists. The quartering of these soldiers amidst the population-going so far as to occupy their homes—prompted violence on several occasions. The maintenance of a standing peacetime army was one of the major causes of the American Revolution; it was specifically cited in the Declaration of Independence as a reason the colonists took up arms against their king.

When the colonies became a nation, the citizens continued to distrust any suggestion that the government should maintain a standing army, which they feared for its potential to stage a coup or to be used against the population. The tradition therefore emerged that in wartime, American armies—and, to some extent, the navies as well—consisted mostly of volunteers who signed up for stints of limited duration. They went home when the fighting was over, or when their enlistments were up.

Every American war from 1775 to 1941

reinforced the tradition that the small standing army would be supplemented by volunteers, the militia (later, the National Guard), and the Reserves. Until the Cold War, the peacetime regular Army remained small. West Point existed to produce a corps of professional officers to command the small army in peacetime and to train and lead the citizen-soldiers in time of war.

BREAKING TRADITION AFTER WW II

At first, it seemed that World War II would be no different in the way that volunteers were used. The armed forces had numbered 323,000 in 1938; by 1945, the number had in-

creased to twelve million. But while volunteers swelled the ranks, throughout the conflict the American people made it clear that their men and women would leave the military once the war was over.

By war's end, however, it became apparent that much had changed. Worldwide, fifty million people had died, and much of Europe and East Asia were in shambles. The United States had become the world's premier military power. Of the great nations of the world, it alone possessed atomic weapons, had not sustained major damage, and had an economy and an industrial base that were actually stronger than before the war.

In 1945, Americans took a cue from their recent history. When World War I ended, the United States had not joined the League of Nations. Many Americans felt the war had not attained the goals for which many thought they had been fighting; that is, to end all wars and make the world safe for democracy. But without the United States as a member, the League of Nations had little chance of success.

Americans did an about-face after World War II and took a leading role in forming the United Nations. In the years immediately following the war, the nation made every effort to prevent international economic chaos and widespread poverty—fertile conditions for the rise of dictatorships and the spread of communism—either of which could bring about another conflagration. To achieve these goals, the United States would have to keep armies of occupation overseas to provide security, preside over the political and economic rebuilding of its friends and former enemies, and ensure the rebuilding process followed the model of Western democracies.

The occupation, however, was initially projected to be short-lived. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had said he didn't expect the troops to be overseas much more than two years after the end of the war. Roosevelt wasn't the only person with this opinion. There were plenty of other Americans who didn't foresee either the huge scale of destruction of Europe's infrastructure or the rapid deterioration of American-Soviet relations. Nor did many Americans immediately recognize the need for the stabilizing influence of long-term American forces overseas.

Responding to political pressure, the popular will, and tradition, President Harry S. Truman quickly demobilized the armed forces. By June 1946, the military had shrunk from 12 million to 3 million; by June 1947, it was down to 1.5 million. The process had gone much too quickly and far too completely. As Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett later said, "We did not just demobilize ... we just disintegrated."

The first years following the war brought about a major reorganization among the services, the birth of the Air Force as a separate service, the formation of the Defense Department (with the passage of the National Security Act of 1947), and unprecedented rivalry among the services for appropriated funds.

But the new postwar world, greeted so optimistically in May and September of 1945, took a negative turn because of the friction between the Soviet Union and its former allies. Britain's former prime minister, Winston Churchill, warned of an "Iron Curtain" descending over Eastern Europe. The worsening situation was accentuated by tension over Berlin, and Churchill's skeptics were rudely awakened to the new

1948-49: THE BERLIN AIRLIFT. In the first major crisis of the Cold War, American and British aircraft broke a Soviet land blockade of West Berlin by transporting thousands of tons of food and fuel to the city's inhabitants. INSET: Combined operations of the U.S. Air Force and Army from Rhein-Main Air Base in Frankfurt, Germany, are conducted twenty-four hours a day to supply Berlin with food and supplies. BELOW RIGHT: Berliners watch an allied aircraft on a transport run. BOTTOM: Airmen of Navy Squadron VR-6 are shown greeting a crew after their return from delivering ten tons of supplies to Tempelhof Airport when the blockade ended in May of 1949. Photos: U.S. Air Forces in Europe

realities of the postwar world by the Soviet blockade of that city in 1947-49.

THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE & DECENTRALIZATION

The developing Cold War soon prompted the perpetuation of large, occupying forces. America's old fears about the dangers of strong standing forces were changed because of the new challenges that the Cold War presented. Truman, who had only recently demobilized the armed forces, developed what became known as the Truman Doctrine: The United States would "support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."

From this doctrine would emerge not only an enlarged American military, but its continued presence overseas and the eventual formation of such alliances as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). The United States soon began to aid and protect Greece and Turkey, and the Marshall Plan extended financial assistance to sixteen nations in Western Europe—osten-



A COMMISSARY TRAIN in Yokohama. Photos: Quartermaster Review

Commissaries Rode the Rails in Postwar Japan

ROBABLY THE MOST unique commissary facilities ever provided to military families were those that rode the rails in postwar Japan.

Within ten months of the end of World War II, American occupation forces were allowed to have their spouses and children join them in Japan. It wasn't long before over thirteen thousand families were stationed in Japan, giving the troops a huge morale boost. It was a commissary nightmare, though, as Lieutenant Colonels James M. Moynihan and T. R. J. Hickey of the Quartermaster Corps summarized the dilemma in *The Quartermaster Review* in 1949: "The occupation force was set down in a defeated, war-ravaged country, whose main cities were substantially destroyed ... foodstuffs were not available from local sources ... we were faced with the problem of establishing food stores ... and the procuring of supplies from the United States."

To handle the earliest family arrivals, makeshift stores were established in rehabilitated buildings that had survived the war. The Navy's main store was in Yokohama, the major port of supply for all services; the Army, the predominant occupying force, had its main store in downtown Tokyo. By 1949, the Army had established an additional thirty-three commissaries in Japan. To do this, the Army relied heavily upon prefabricated structures and Quonset huts, most of them conveniently placed in newly built dependent housing areas.

Store personnel everywhere can still identify with one vexing problem the commissaries faced in Japan: "People back home seemed totally incapable of visualizing the geographic dispersal of our personnel in Japan ... Requisitions for resale items were edited as though Japan were occupied by a tight little community served by one huge sales commissary, instead of thirty-four stores spread over many hundreds of miles and separated by many hours of arduous train travel." Meanwhile, American store equipment was almost impossible to procure, and items of Japanese manufacture, such as cash registers, refrigeration units, and freezers, were rare or inadequate. Moynihan and Hickey noted, "Other than a few sales-control machines and deep-freeze cabinets, we were



1948: INSIDE THE KYOTO commissary train. This photograph shows the layout of the first car's interior. The Kyoto train served U.S. troops and their families in Maizuru, Fukui, Kanazawa, and Toyama.

able to expect, and received, little from the United States. Japanese fixtures and equipment fell far below stateside standards ... the [wartime] disruption of their industries had been quite complete."

Throughout Japan, there were government teams and small military detachments assisting with the demilitarization, democratization, and rehabilitation policies of Gen. Douglas MacArthur. Many of the individuals in these detachments lived with their families in scattered, isolated areas, and though they had as much a right to the commissary benefit as any soldiers in urban areas, they had no access to commissary facilities. This situation inspired some ingenuity to develop a new approach.

As Moynihan and Hickey declared, "The only solution, if we



couldn't bring Mahomet to the mountain, was to do the reverse and take the commissary, on wheels, to the housewife, or at least to the nearest railroad station." Trains had been successfully used before by both the commissaries and the exchanges in Alaska; now, since transport would be more reliable by rail than by road, the Quartermaster Corps created seven commissary trains to provide mobile food stores on Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku. Each served several outlying bases on a regular schedule, making one stop per week at each station and remaining as long as half a day.

At first the trains simply delivered pre-placed orders, and shoppers did not have the opportunity to visually inspect and choose their own products. By January 1949, though, the trains had become sales commissaries on rails. Each had at least six cars: one with an electrical generator and a large freezer; a refrigerated car with two chill boxes for produce and dairy products; another with a meat-cutting room, a meat market area with showcase, an area for eggs and butter, bins for fresh produce, and deep-freeze cabinets for frozen fruits and vegetables; a car for the sale of canned and packaged goods and other nonperishables; a crew car, housing the four enlisted men and three local nation-

als who ran
the store; and a
warehouse car carrying
nonperishables. Sometimes an additional warehouse car was added, as well as cars
for mail and PX operations.

The trains made a significant contribution to American morale until additional permanent facilities were established. The exact date of the last run is currently unknown, but the Korean War changed things appreciably in Japan, and the commissary trains stopped running by 1955.

Moynihan and Hickey were, unfortunately, never precise as to whose idea the trains had been. Perhaps they originated the concept but were too modest to say so. They did give a great deal of credit to Capt. Peter G. Anter of the Quartermaster Corps, who had experience in the civilian grocery industry and lent his ingenuity, hard work, and sound planning to the commissaries in Japan. Whoever conceived the idea deserves credit. The trains were remarkably simple, effective, and well worth remembering.

sibly to help the nations recover from war, but also to keep them out of the hands of the communists.

Americans still distrusted large, permanent, peacetime forces because they were a new phenomenon. Therefore, deferring to public perceptions, many of the Defense Department's functions were located away from the nation's capital. Hundreds of bases, as well as major defense industries, were already scattered throughout the country and around the globe. This decentralization helped disperse the military and prevent the perception of the military as being immense and threatening to the citizens' rights.

Decentralization also served other purposes. It enabled politicians to bring jobs and construction projects to their home districts, and these were enough to dissolve people's distrust, especially when so many young men from around the country were in uniform. After the Soviets acquired their own atomic bomb in 1949, decentralization also satisfied the American

military's desire to make sure "all the eggs weren't in one basket," where one nuclear weapon could destroy all the eggs at once.

In the mid-1940s, decentralization was in vogue, and commissaries adapted to this concept. They had always been run at installation level, with a minimum of advice and oversight from the services. After the war, commissaries remained largely a function of the individual bases, which supplied them with water, electricity, and other services, including police and fire protection, and garbage pickup.

THE GROWTH OF MILITARY FAMILIES

The world had changed, bringing to an end the tradition of Johnny marching home, getting his hearty welcome, joining in the general rejoicing and jubilee, placing his gun back on the mantel, gathering up the plow, and getting back to work in the field. Now the United States was victorious, supremely confident, and eager to turn its old enemies into flourishing democracies and models of modern capitalism. Japan



IF JOHNNY WASN'T going to come marching home, remaining instead with the occupying forces, we would try to make life as normal for him as possible. That meant if Johnny was married, he was going to be able to have his wife and children join him. Once that happened, commissaries took on a whole new importance.

Photo: Military Market, Army Times Publications

and Germany would, under U.S. occupation, tutelage and sponsorship, adopt constitutions on the American model.

It was suddenly desirable to maintain large forces overseas. Those forces were there to bring stability and guard against lawlessness and insurrection. They also sent a message to potential troublemakers—whether they were right-wing, radical nationalists, Nazis, fascists, or left-wing communists—that the United States wasn't about to tolerate their presence in Japan or in Western Europe. The American forces that went to Europe and Japan remained there for the long haul, and their organizational descendants are still there today.

There was a catch: Americans were not quite ready to give up their traditional feelings about the military. So, if Johnny wasn't going to come marching home, remaining instead with the occupying forces, we would try to make life as normal for him as possible. That meant if Johnny was married, he was going to be able to have his wife and children join him. Once that happened, commissaries took on a whole new importance.

Young Americans are adaptable, and when they are stationed overseas they are willing to sample all sorts of foreign foods; the extent to which Italian sauces and spices became so popular after the war was proof of that. But families overseas, especially children, also wanted to eat familiar foods. Commissaries gave them some local flavor, along with a lot of backhome favorites: milk, cold cereals, fruits and vegetables, canned and packaged goods with American brand names, and varieties of meats, especially beef, all produced and packaged according to American standards of quality and sanitation. As a bonus, the inspections for food safety exceeded anything in the private sector.

POSTWAR EXPECTATIONS

Whether they were stationed in the United States or overseas, postwar military families expected military life to be as much like civilian life in the states as possible. Their expectations were completely different from those of the

typical military family prior to the war.

Many factors shaped the postwar period for the military, including vivid memories of the Great Depression and the memory of the energy and unbridled enthusiasm of a patriotic, successful war effort. The country had made a switch from a booming wartime economy to a booming postwar consumer economy.

It was evident that no one wanted the country to revert to prewar conditions. Americans at home believed they had earned postwar prosperity, including consumer goods from cars to refrigerators, because of promises that had been made to them. An old political slogan had become a wartime answer as to what the men thought they were fighting for: "A chicken in every pot, and a car in every garage."

After World War II, more Americans would begin to share in the national prosperity. Women and minorities had entered the armed forces in large numbers. They had made even more forays into the workforce than during World War I, and now many of them were determined to stay

there. At the end of the Second World War, that ambition was supported by, among others, local and national labor unions and the president of the United States.

Sharing in the national prosperity were military families, who felt they had just as much right to the benefits of the postwar prosperity as anyone else, and probably a little more. Those benefits included good pay, good housing, pleasant communities, and good places in which to shop. Military wives in particular expected clean, modern commissaries and exchanges. They were often disappointed in that expectation, and few were too shy to voice their opinions about such matters.



LATEST THING IN FAST FOODS. ABOVE: The Horn & Hardart Automat as it appeared in postwar New York City. BELOW: The Automat's interior was more lavish than those of today's fast-food franchises. DeCA historical file



CHANGING WORKFORCE; GROWING PRODUCT LIST

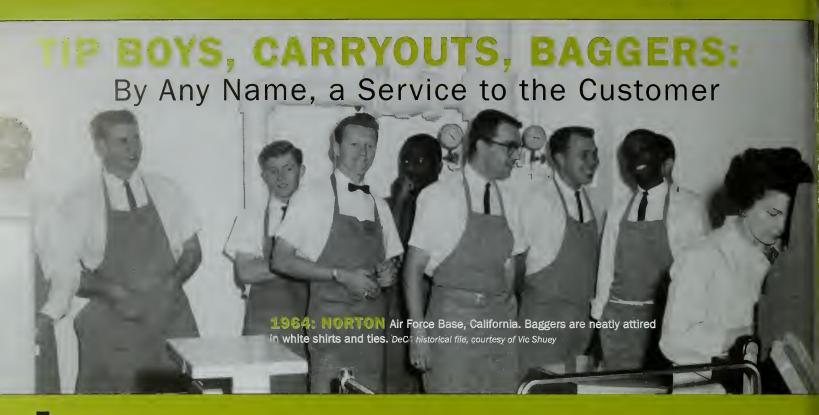
During World War II, an increasing number of women and minorities were employed in the retail grocery business. By war's end, half of all civilian grocery store employees were women. They were primarily cashiers, and part-time ones at that, but it was still a job opportunity that hadn't existed two decades earlier, when most grocery cashiers and clerks had been male. Military commissaries still primarily used male cashiers, but it wouldn't take long for that to change—not when spouses were coming on post in record numbers, some of them wanting part-time work.

An explosion of new products hit the market shortly after the war ended. The emerging consumer society was encouraged by the advertising industry in newspapers, magazines, radio, and soon in the phenomenal growth of commercial television. Advertisements were becoming extraordinarily proficient at convincing people they needed things they had previously done without. Customers expected to see these new products in their local grocery stores or supermarkets. Self-service was now becoming the norm. The civilian-sector store or chain that didn't keep up with these changes was in peril.

Military personnel and their spouses expected to see those same products in their commissaries. If the products weren't available, the military spouse was likely to be disenchanted with other aspects of military life. That would discourage reenlistment. In another era, it wouldn't have much mattered; after World War II, it did.

ATTACKS AT HOME; STABILITY ABROAD

Soon after the war, private-sector grocery chains began attacking domestic commissaries, claiming they interfered with their rights to sell to military families. By 1949, these retailers had managed to force the closure of twenty-four stores in the continental United States. Most of those stores were located in or near towns and cities, and the retailers had claimed the commissaries provided "unnecessary and unfair government



T'S VERY POSSIBLE that the people in the commissary who make the biggest, longest-lasting impression upon the customers are people who technically aren't even store employees.

A customer's attitude about the commissary can be easily influenced by the person bagging and carrying out the patron's groceries, the person known as the "bagger."

Baggers were called *tip boys*, *bag boys*, *parcel boys*, or even *page boys* years ago, and are sometimes referred to as *carryouts* nowadays, since the term bagger now implies that whoever bags up the groceries will also carry them out to the customer's car. Of all the people connected with the commissary, they probably spend the most time, and perhaps carry on the most conversation, with each customer; only the

cashiers could possibly rival them for customer-

The baggers know their friendliness and competence will directly influence the size of the tip they receive. In this case no amount of smiling and joking will influence the size of the tip. That is, after all, what baggers work for—tips only. It has been this way at most locations for the last fifty years.

In all that time, baggers have never been commissary employees. There was, however, a time when they nearly became such. In 1976, the Civil Service Commission, Justice Department, and General Accounting Office all decided that the policy of not paying baggers was wrong, and the baggers needed to be covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. Tradition was nearly scrapped, and in 1978, the services drew up plans preparatory to baggers being made employees.

Congress, however, had the last word in the form of the Roth-Stone Amendment to the Military Appropriations Act of 1978. This amendment, sponsored by Senators William B. Roth (D-

Delaware) and Richard Stone (D-Florida) in July, 1978, exempted commissary baggers from being government employees. Stone stated his rationale succinctly: "If the employees who are supposed to be protected don't like it (being covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act), and the customers who are supposed to be served don't like it, and the employees who would hire and supervise the baggers don't like it, then whom does it serve?"

Ultimately, Congress determined that it would be cost-effective to maintain the status quo. The subsequent passage of the Roth-Stone Amendment did, for the first time, legally establish baggers as self-employed contractors.

Baggers did not exist in their present form until the mid-1950s, when they were volunteers, carrying groceries to the patrons' cars, working for tips only. Before that, while a store's staff might place a customer's purchase in a bag, box, or sack, at most stores the staff had been too small and overworked to also perform such additional customer service. In the 1920s and 1930s, store clerks had often done the bagging, but it had always been done as a courtesy to the customer, and tips were seldom forthcoming. Not all store clerks had the time, energy, or inclination to carry customers' purchases to their automobiles, especially when the weather wasn't particularly pleasant and tips were rare.

The first commissary carryout baggers started appearing more or less simultaneously, in many different locations, due to a common need. That need developed after World War II, when home-delivery service began to decline, stock lists grew, grocery carts increased in capacity, purchases grew in size, and more shoppers drove automobiles to the store. Home delivery had been the ideal way for a customer to get groceries to the kitchen. When the service disappeared, carryout became the next best thing.



1998: LINA FISHER bags a customer's groceries at Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Portsmouth, Virginia. DeCA photo: Pete Skirbunt

One of the earliest photos showing employees who doubled as baggers and carryouts was taken at the Manila Leave Center commissary in 1946. In 1947, the Washington Heights (Japan) store called them page boys, and the service must have been popular; the store posted notices that the boys were there only to carry purchases to a customer's car-they were not to take it to the customer's quarters. Other stores quickly followed suit. Leroy Bischoff, who worked at the Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, store in 1952, recalled that he was expected to stock shelves, as well as bag and carry out groceries, and he never expected (and seldom received) any tips. At the same time, at the Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, commissary, nonviolent prison inmates were used as baggers until 1993, and there were conspicuous "No Tipping" signs, making the policy clear to every customer.

Fort Leavenworth wasn't the only place that used prisoners. Several other stores are known to have done so, particularly nearby Fort Riley, which began replacing stockade

people between 1963 and 1965. While some would think that having convicts bagging groceries would be an unsettling experience, the exact opposite appears to be true. At both Leavenworth and Riley, the customers became upset when they were suddenly confronted by non-convicts who expected cash tips for performing a job that had previously been a free service.

Stores usually made the service optional. A customer wishing to sack his own groceries was allowed to do so. At Sagamihara, Japan, in 1954, a large sign above the exits announced, "If requesting Carryout, please sign control sheet." The cost per bag per carryout was obscured in the photo, but it was probably 5 cents, because another sign announced that home delivery was available, at a cost of 10 cents per bag. Home delivery had traditionally been free of charge at most locations, So times were changing.

They changed a lot more in 1955, with the introduction of moving conveyor belts at commissary checkout stands around the world. The belts considerably sped up the transaction process at the registers, necessitating bagger-carryouts to keep the checkout lines moving. An increased customer base was shopping longer hours, choosing from an ever-increasing stock assortment and buying more goods placed in



1984: BAGGING GROCERIES at Fort Benning, Georgia. TSA photo, DeCA historical file

larger shopping carts. A store could not afford to have things get jammed up at the front end; the customers had to be cleared through the registers, moved out the doors, into their cars, and out of the parking lot as quickly as possible, to make room for more customers. Good bagger-carryouts kept the system flowing smoothly.

In 1955, Military Market ran its first article mentioning baggers. These were the all-volunteer tip boys of Clark Air Base, in the Philippines, who worked for tips only. Tip boys, carryout boys, baggers—whatever they were called—started becoming more common. Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas, had a big crew of them in 1958. In 1960, Naval Air Station Moffett Field, California, began using off-duty enlisted personnel who worked for tips only, replacing active-duty enlisted personnel who had served as baggers and carryouts free of charge.

Perhaps the most interesting transformations have to do with gender and age. People older than teenagers began bagging in large numbers during the recession of the 1970s,

and more females began bagging as women pushed for equal rights. In fact, today, in most stores, female baggers are clearly in the majority.

Although they are not legally considered employees, the baggers have a symbiotic relationship with the store. Both profit from the other's presence, and neither could properly function without the other.



OCTOBER 1945: MANILA LEAVE CENTER, Philippines. Note the large, wicker shopping baskets and the bagger in a white apron. This facility did not have cash registers. Instead it relied on clerks to write up orders and use adding machines to total bills. *National Archives*



competition" because of the widespread availability of civilian markets.

But advocates of commissary privatization found their gains cut short. In 1949, the Soviets tested their first atomic weapon, communists took control of China, and just a year later, war broke out in Korea. All were events that triggered the Red Scare at home and fueled the conviction that larger active-duty armed forces were a necessity. The new aura of crisis and imminent danger both at home and abroad soon inspired renewed appreciation for the military.

CIVILIAN STORES NEAR BASES

The chain of events leading to the eventual creation of the Defense Commissary Agency in 1991 began immediately after World War II. The circumstances were very similar to those that had followed the Civil War. In 1945, more people than ever were

aware of the existence and the nature of commissaries. Many Americans had been in uniform, and they and their families had an appreciation for the challenges of military life. The war effort had brought huge numbers of civilian workers to military installations, where they also became familiar with military practices.

Bases grew, and civilian neighborhoods filled with base workers grew up nearby. Years of postwar prosperity then caused an urban sprawl that reached, and eventually surrounded, many bases that had previously been on the cities' outskirts. Along with the new neighborhoods came grocery stores and supermarkets.

During the war, few people complained that commissaries, exchanges, or canteens were competing with civilian enterprises. There was enough business for everyone, and nothing was too good for the men in uniform. With war's end came an expectation that the military would downsize, and soldiers and sailors would go back to being civilians shopping at civilian sector stores.

Thus a different attitude emerged among managers of the new supermarkets near the bases. They began to believe the military personnel at the local bases were rightfully their customers, and they looked upon the commissaries as competition.

In reality, commissaries posed little actual competition. They couldn't advertise, and they couldn't steal civilian customers from nearby private-sector stores simply because they couldn't serve civilians. Commissaries had a difficult time maintaining customer loyalty among military families, who were increasingly attracted to off-post stores, where stock lists were far larger.

There were only 210 stateside commissaries in 1945, while there were thousands of civilian supermarkets and corner grocers. Civilian stores offered items the com-

missaries could not, helping them draw military customers away from the commissaries. That the commissaries had been located on or near military installations for years, and that civilian stores were competing with the commissaries for active-duty customers—not the other way around, as is so often claimed—does not seem to have occurred to anyone "outside the gate."

At the time, Col. John T. Sprague, the commander of Waco Air Force Base, Texas, noted that commissaries were not as big as their critics perceived. He pointed out that the military stores actually sold some goods at prices slightly higher than the local civilian establishments. The reason for this, he said, was that the commissary's "last stock was bought at higher prices ... and the commissary can't adjust its list as quickly as a private merchant." The Waco Tribune-Herald newspaper took a broader view of the situation, noting that the base was "a \$650,000 gold mine" for the local economy. The existence of a commissary and exchange didn't alter that.

Still, the perception of unfair government competition struck a nerve in the postwar years. Soon there were several serious attempts to do away with commissaries entirely, presaging similar efforts in later years.

STORES OVERSEAS

Despite these challenges to domestic commissaries, stores continued to open wherever there was an appreciable U.S. military presence overseas. World War II had placed American forces all over the world, and the presence of commissaries in so many far-flung, isolated, or colorful locations was a direct result of America's role as postwar peacekeeper and its strategy of containing communism.

Between 1945 and 1953, commissaries tended to be both large and numerous where there were the greatest numbers of troops and their families. Such was the case in Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom. Stores also began to open in France, Italy, Austria, Australia, Spain, Greece, the Netherlands, Belgium, Turkey, Algeria, Egypt, Eritrea, Libya, Morocco,



1948: NASUGBU BEACH, Japan. The specially built commissary (foreground), exchange and theater were integral to the community center, surrounded by Army family housing. U.S. Army Quartermaster Museum

Guam, Okinawa, Iceland, Bermuda, the Azores, the West Indies, and even Peru. Soon commissaries would also be operating in Norway, Labrador, Korea, Thailand, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. As to the stores' prewar foreign locations, only in China did American military commissaries completely disappear. They continued operating in Puerto Rico and Panama, and by early 1945 they had been reestablished in the Philippines.

In countries that had suffered war damage, any available building could have been turned into a commissary. There was a department store on the Ginza strip in Tokyo, a warehouse in downtown Athens, Quonset huts in England, and several structures previously used by the Nazis in Germany. Dozens of places of all shapes, sizes, and descriptions were converted into makeshift commissary sales stores.

These would serve for a while, but the occupation forces grew. Military housing areas had to be built, and those areas were planned communities. They usually included all the familiar components of an American military community back home: officers' and enlisted clubs, theaters, an exchange, recreational facilities (bowling alleys, gymnasiums, swimming pools), and, of course, a commissary.

Stores in Germany and the UK: Commissaries were a major contributor to the United States' ability to maintain troops overseas during the Cold War. In 1949, scattered throughout Germany were at least 115 commissaries, large and small, serving large garrisons and small outposts.

The Army alone ran sixty-one stores in Europe (most of which were in Germany), serving over seventy-three thousand people. Yet none of the stores in Europe could be called *typical* because of the wide variation in the type of available facilities in which the stores were established. Each had its own history and personality.

One of the most colorful stores was the Munich commissary, which boasted murals (painted by the employees), balconies, fountains, and large shopping carts with double full-size baskets and a modern "swept back" design. Employees included locals who dressed in *leiderhosen* (also spelled *lederhosen*), a traditional German pair of short pants or knickers with suspenders. In the commissary's basement were sealed-off tunnel entrances, fueling conjecture that those features were built by the Nazis before or during the war either as escape routes or as a means for entering various parts of the city unobserved.

In Berlin, there was a commissary at Andrews Barracks, 1946-49. In June 1950, another store opened in one wing of the Berlin Command shopping center and remained there until replaced in 1958. The

most modern store in Germany was at Vogelweh. It had sparkling, new equipment, and a highly professional staff. But it was the Heidelberg commissary that was established as a model store, with the goal of bringing some degree of standardization to all commissaries in Germany. One of Heidelberg's most popular features was a home-delivery service for people residing in the immediate area.

There were many stores in the United Kingdom. The immediate postwar history of these stores during the war is something that—for now, at least—has been lost. No doubt many of them were combined with exchanges. There may have been as many as one hundred during the war, because nearly forty stores were still open in the late 1950s, including several in Scotland. These were stores and bases of various ages and sizes. The UK stores were as varied as the country-side was picturesque.

Greece: Although for many years there was only one military commissary in the entire country, its function was very important. Located in downtown Athens, it supported the American embassy and members of the State Department, soldiers stationed in the immediate area, and their families. It soon began to support American troops that were scattered throughout the country, assisting anti-communist Greek forces. The store was vital to upholding the mission of the Marshall Plan, which was to keep Greece firmly in the Western fold, out from under Soviet domination.

Assuming Soviet Premier Josef Stalin would support the Greek communist insurgents, the United States was determined to take all necessary measures to keep Greece allied with the West. The Athens commissary was responsible for getting rations and sales goods to American soldiers throughout Greece. Army Captain E. J. Janota was the commissary officer.

The location of the commissary he inherited had been determined by its proximity to the embassy and personnel quarters. Years later, Janota recalled, "People located themselves within walking distance of the embassy, because most arrived without automobiles. ... So the commissary was downtown in Athens simply because the population was in that area." One of Janota's major accomplishments was finding a larger, more suitable building and moving the commissary operations into it before more American personnel arrived. The previous store would have been swamped with incoming orders and outgoing shipments, and overflowing with customers.

By 1951, Janota's job in Greece was finished, and the military, together with aid from the Marshall Plan, had secured the country for the West. In later years other stores were established in Greece, but the downtown Athens store remained in business longer than any of them, finally closing its doors in 1995.

Ironically, this effort may not have been necessary. Near the end of the war, Stalin had told Churchill that he had no inter-







In the Shadows of the PARTHENON

Retired Army Lt. Col. E. J. Janota was a captain in his twenties when he was assigned as commissary officer in downtown Athens, Greece, in 1947. It would seem that the responsibility for such a vital operation must have been overwhelming at times. That's not the case, however. Americans had been growing up in a hig hurry during the previous two decades. Compared with some of his enlisted help, Janota was an old-timer. The store he established continued to function as a commissary until 1995. His experiences provide a glimpse of life in postwar Europe, the Greek civil war, and the difficulties in running a postwar overseas commissary. —Author

APT. E. J. JANOTA ARRIVED in Athens in September 1947 as the commissary officer for the American embassy. He had no prior commissary experience, but in those days that was not unusual; most stores were small, with one or two registers and a small stock assortment, and people were expected to learn on the job. Years later, he recalled, "I'd never been in a commissary before, except to go in one just before my departure for Greece, to see if they had anything that would tell me how to be a commissary officer!"

Greece was going through a civil war sparked by Greek communists; the United States and Great Britain were aiding the anti-communist forces. When Janota arrived, he found the commissary was "a little dinky place ... right down in the middle of Athens ... upstairs, with a winding staircase and no elevator." The location of this less-than-ideal facility had been determined primarily by its location: It was close to the embassy and personnel quarters. When he learned many more Americans would soon be coming to Greece, he started looking for a larger facility. He settled on a location at 109 Syngrou Avenue that had a sales area of about 8,500 square feet, with two checkouts and 3,400 square feet of backup space.

Sure enough, in 1948, Americans began to come in droves. It was all part of a plan to have detachments of 10 or 12 men attached to Greek army units, assisting them in training. There could have been chaos at the commissary, but there wasn't. "We were able to take care of the needs of the people in the field and in the local areas; the commissary was adequately staffed and stocked, with more goods always in the pipeline." The Air Force assisted the operations, using C-47 transports to fly food to the Army detachments, which would send the commissary a list of what they needed and would then send a truck, car, or plane to pick up the order. Janota eventually "had to build and establish a special section in the new commissary devoted to the air shipment of supplies ... it became a major operation."

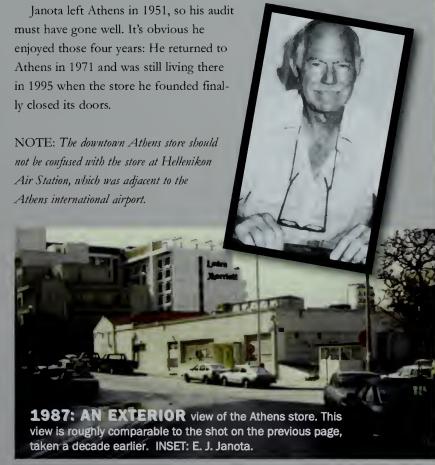
At the store itself, some customers abused their privileges by hoarding or even by selling their excess for a profit. In order to keep his shelves stocked, Janota needed to protect his customers from their own bad habits. He mimeographed ration cards for coffee, sugar, rice, and any other items that were in short supply. Later, he put a money limit on the amount that could be bought. "It was \$25 for a single person, \$50 for a couple, and then increased depending on the number that were in the family. The total limit was somewhere around \$125, regardless of how many children you had."

There were several memorable characters among the regular customers, and the young Greek employees started identifying them with characters in the cartoon sections in the American and British newspapers. The most memorable was a woman who wore dark glasses and slinky clothing, "The young fellas began to call her 'the Dragon Lady,' after the character in the old *Terry and the Pirates* comic strip."

Janota recalled that his Greek employees were wonderful, and his NCOs were invaluable. Of the former, store manager George Paidas was "one of the most dedicated employees I ever had." He eventually emigrated to the United States, became an American citizen, and retired as a vice president and general manager of a banana company in Miami. Of the latter, Janota admitted, "Good NCOs who knew their job ... knew more about running a store than I did. The success of the commissary really depended on their knowledge and know-how. ... For instance, I really needed an NCO as a trained butcher. The civilian butcher I had meant well, but he knew how to cut beef only three ways—all three with a meat cleaver!"

Like many other stores of the day, the commissary had home delivery. "We arranged to have lockers where the customers would place their purchases, put on a padlock, and leave a key with the commissary. We'd deliver the purchases in the afternoon."

Janota faced some formidable monetary challenges. "I was kept on a short leash money-wise; I was *solely responsible* for money losses." Any difference at the end of the month came out of his pocket. Complicating matters, he had to accept dollars, drachmas, or British pounds in payment for goods. Not only did the three sets of currency cause him "tremendous headaches," but he discovered he was losing money on a daily basis: "I was told to sell at the rate of 5,000 drachmas to one dollar, but it wasn't long before their rate at the bank was 8,000 to one. Since a commissary officer had to have an audit before he could be transferred, it worried me because of the losses I'd taken from drachmas."







est in keeping Greece inside the Soviet sphere of influence. Of course, Stalin had shown on many occasions that he could not be trusted; but this time, he was true to his word and made no effort to support the Greek communists. Possibly the American presence had something to do with that. If so, the extraordinary efforts of the Athens commissary had helped hold the line against communism in the Balkans.

France. Today, few remember the stores established in postwar France. There were probably over forty of them scattered throughout the country. But France was determined to regain some of its lost prestige by making its own way and did not wish the United States to dominate postwar Europe. The desire of the French to act independently of their former allies and go it alone eventually led to the closing of American bases there. They asked all American forces to leave French soil by 1968.

The Mid-Atlantic. During World War II, British forces occupied the base at Lajes Field, located five hundred miles west of Portugal on Terceira Island in the Azores. They allowed the Americans to use the landing field, and by 1948 the United States became the official tenant. A commissary was an obvious necessity in such a far-flung, isolated island location, and a store was in operation by 1952. Family members had been authorized to live in the islands in 1948, and it's likely a small commissary, at least, was available to them. There probably was also a small store on Santa Maria Island, where Americans in the Azores were located before 1951.

The British had also operated the base at Keflavik, Iceland, in the North Atlantic. During the war, the U.S. Army had facilities at Keflavik that included a food dump and probably a small sales store. When the Americans formally took possession of Keflavik in 1951, the Air Force seems to have opened a small sales store there, although documentation only positively confirms a store being there in 1960.

Guam. At least two stores operated on Guam in the Marianas Islands starting in 1945 or 1946. One was located in an area



1940s: JAPAN. A store worker retrieves fresh pastries. U.S. Army Quartermaster Museum

officially attached to Andersen Air Base (possibly for housing), which was five miles away. The area was known as "Marbo," an acronym of the "Marianas-Bonin Command" in the Marianas and Bonin Islands.

The other was located at Guam's Naval Supply Depot near Agana. The commissary there may have been combined with the Navy exchange in 1952.

JAPAN'S COMMISSARY TRAINS

At the start of the postwar occupation of Japan, numerous commissaries were scattered across the country. The first stores were established in the Tokyo area. One occupied the basement, sub-basement, and first floor of an old department store on the Ginza strip downtown. The other was in a newly constructed building that was designed and built specifically as a commissary and placed in the family housing area of Grant Heights. More stores were soon built in the housing areas of Nasugbu Beach (where the commissary was built next to a PX and theater) and Washington Heights. Meanwhile, the Navy opened a big store at Yokohama, the main port of supply for all services. One unique product on Yokohama's shelves was local mushrooms, harvested from nearby caves.

Many servicemen assigned to Japan soon had family members living in-country, making commissaries a necessity. But many camps and stations in isolated locations scattered throughout the four main islands had only small numbers of eligible commissary customers. Since this was a budget-cutting era, establishment of fixed, permanent commissary buildings was cost-prohibitive for all but the most populated areas.

There were many small units scattered among far-flung bases that lacked buildings adequate to house commissaries. Even if such buildings could have been found or built, equipment (especially refrigerators and freezers) was nearly impossible to procure. Customers traveling to their nearest big-city commissary found the journey difficult, if not impractical, because of a primitive road system, damaged by the war. This situation prompted the creation of several commissary trains, a clever solution to a vexing problem.

Until events in the Orient forced the United States to commit attention and military strength to East Asia, American forces in Japan often had to devise makeshift measures to improve their daily lives. The commissary trains were one of those measures. They provided mobile food stores on three of Japan's four home islands, saving the armed forces the expense of building dozens of small stores.

Each train had several cars dedicated to commissary operations, including a refrigerated car, produce, dairy products, a meatcutting room and a meat-market area, deep-freeze cabinets for frozen fruits and vegetables, as well as a section for canned, packaged, and other nonperishable goods. The trains were perhaps the most ingenious method of supplying people with resale facilities in commissary history.

By May of 1949, the trains and over thirty fixed-location stores (many of which were small) supported thirteen thousand American families. The number of commissary customers increased in 1950, the first year of the Korean War, for which Japan became the major staging area for American logistics operations.

COMMITTEES AND STUDIES

Within a few years of the end of World War II, congressional committees and commissions began probing the purpose of, and need for, commissaries. Included were several congressional subcommittees, a commission chaired by former President Herbert Hoover and reports by at least two civilian retailing organizations. All declared commissaries should be severely limited, contracted out, completely closed, or become self-supporting. None of these recommendations were carried out, but during the early postwar era, the commissaries continued to draw attacks from several directions.

In 1945, Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal appointed a committee composed of Reserve officers to examine all Navy resale activities. This was the Bingham Committee, named for its chairman, Capt. Wheelock H. Bingham of the Navy



1946: TOKYO GRAND OPENING. Customers check out groceries during the grand opening of the downtown Tokyo quartermaster commissary. U.S. Army Quartermaster Museum

Reserves. His selection to head the committee was no fluke. His business acumen was outstanding, so much so that he later became president of the R. H. Macy Company.

The Navy's far-flung resale activities were in danger of becoming unmanageable. In its report, the Bingham Committee proposed that ships' service stores be transferred from the Bureau of Naval Personnel to the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts and that a "strong central organization" be established to eliminate the "unbusinesslike" approach that existed under the existing decentralized operations.

On Feb. 8, 1945, the Navy decided to

consolidate all its resale activities under the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts. This move turned out to be only a temporary expedient, however, because Forrestal recognized the arrangement was not a particularly good fit; an entirely separate agency was needed.

Accordingly, in April 1946, Forrestal approved the formation of the Navy Resale System (NRS), which would provide the strong, independent, centralized organization recommended by the Bingham Committee. NRS included the Navy Ship's Store Office (NSSO), which was responsible for both Stores Afloat and Stores Ashore. The Stores Afloat were

shipboard retail activities; Stores Ashore later became known as Navy commissaries. Navy exchanges emerged from Navy Service Stores.

At first, NSSO was head-quartered at 111 East 16th Street in New York City, but it moved to the block between 29th and 30th Streets on Third Avenue in Brooklyn in July 1946. There, it and its successor organizations would remain for forty years. Navy Capt. T. L. Becknell Jr., Supply



Corps, was NSSO's first officer in charge.

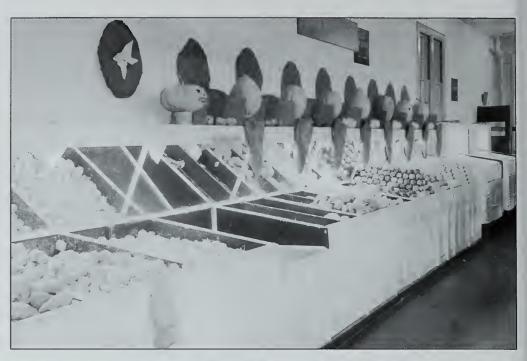
The NSSO Advisory Committee, the office's governing body, consisted of four senior officers who were experienced in banking, business education, business administration, and related disciplines. The committee acted as a board of directors, monitoring operations, providing guidance, and making recommendations.

The rationale in establishing the NRS and NSSO was to consolidate all naval retail operations, create uniformity, strive for better product quality, and provide better service to the customers. The Navy thus became the first of the services to begin professionalizing its commissaries. Suddenly, the Navy—which had lagged behind the Army by forty-two years in establishing commissary sales stores—was moving considerably ahead of the Army in modernizing its retail systems.

THE HOOK COMMISSION

The first of two bodies appointed by the Defense Department and the Truman Administration to study military compensation was the Advisory Commission on Service Pay. It was more commonly known as the Hook Commission, named for its chairman, Charles R. Hook, an Ohio industrialist who served on numerous government commissions during and after both World Wars.

James V. Forrestal, who was now the secretary of defense, appointed the commission in 1947-48. It undertook a major



1949: CHERRY POINT, North Carolina. Pumpkins and jack-o'-lanterns line the wall in a seasonal display the morning after Halloween at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. These bins, with mirrors to make the produce seem larger and more colorful, project an aura of abundance. Such displays, common today, were cutting-edge at the time. U.S. Marine Corps Historical Center

review of all types of military pay and examined the logic and justifications for all types of military compensation.

Today, the commission's report, Career Compensation for the Uniformed Services, is largely forgotten, but the committee did its work well. Four decades later, the Department of Defense still considered it to be the most important and fundamental study of military compensation since World War II. The report looked favorably upon commissaries. Noting that commissary benefits were taken into account when service pay levels were set, it warned that if

commissaries and other benefits were ever taken away, service pay would have to appreciably increase. The report formed a basis for recommendations to Congress to restructure military compensation.

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES PROBE

Despite the work and wholehearted endorsement of the Hook Commission, commissaries remained under attack. On May 2, 1949, following complaints by civilian retailers and business associations alleging unfair competition from the military services, House Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Vinson, a Georgia Democrat, ordered a probe of tax-free purchases being made by servicemen at commissaries and exchanges. Opponents of this probe viewed the charge of unfair competition as ludicrous, considering the obvious worth of the armed forces to the local merchants' way of life. In their view, people at the installations contributed substantially to local economies in terms of rents, mortgages, taxes, and purchases of major items such as automobiles.

THE PHILBIN SUBCOMMITTEE

In 1949 the House Armed Services Committee's Special Subcommittee on



1947: WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, Japan. This commissary, shown here in November, was similar to the store at Sagamihara. U.S. Army Quartermaster Museum

Resale Activities had oversight of post exchanges, quartermaster sales stores, ships' service stores, commissaries and related activities. Also known as the "Special Subcommittee on Exchanges and Commissaries," it was commonly referred to as the Philbin Subcommittee for its chairman, Congressman Philip J. Philbin, a Massachusetts Democrat. The subcommittee would remain in business into the early 1970s, overseeing the military's retail activities and examining whether or not taxpayer dollars were being well spent.

Unfortunately, through a series of uncontested comments, the subcommittee mistakenly set the stage for decades of attacks on military benefits. In a session on April 12, 1949, it placed into the public record some incorrect assumptions concerning the original purpose of the commissaries.

The situation deteriorated as time went on. The subcommit-

tee's first report included numerous statements based upon an inaccurate interpretation of history, completely ignoring the wording of the legislation establishing commissaries in 1866-67 and exchanges in 1895. Like the "remote posts" statement made in 1932 to the Naval Affairs Committee, these statements remained largely unchallenged for years.

Typical was Philbin's concluding statement, which helped to perpetuate and strengthen the remote posts myth that had plagued commissaries since 1932:

"The whole theory of the commissary privilege ... was originally to give it to the people who were at isolated stations who did not have the benefit of metropolitan sales. That is the whole theory and the only justification for it. It was never intended that the government should go in the business of providing for its personnel where they have the privilege and the opportunity to go to a private place to buy. It was intended on account of the remoteness of stations to accommodate them The committee recognizes the fact that



CARLISLE BARRACKS, Pennsylvania. The meat department manager waits on a brigadier general sometime between 1945 and 1950. U.S. Army Information School

commissaries were originally established for the convenience of military personnel who were not conveniently located to comparable civilian facilities." [Emphasis added]

Of course this statement wasn't true, and the stereotyping in which the committee engaged only added fuel to the fire by ignoring, as one example, the need for enlisted men with low salaries to get a price break in high cost-of-living urban areas. One witness who missed this point said, "Our concern is that at an isolated station where we do not have civilian stores whose prices are kept in line by adequate competition, we must protect our people. Clearly, in Washington, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, or any city where you have commercial facilities which sell commodities at reasonable prices, the need for the military to run its own shop [commissary stores] disappears."

The report also cautioned that the subcommittee did not subscribe to the philosophy that exchanges should be maintained primarily for the generation of profits to benefit the recreation and welfare fund. Instead, it said "the sole justification for the maintenance and operation of post exchanges, ships' service stores, and commissaries" was the convenience and morale of military members. This portion of the report, at least, was similar to some of the things supporters of the commissary had been saying all along.

The committee ignored the urban sprawl that had placed civilian stores squarely in competition with the commissaries for military customers; that the commissary was important as a non-pay benefit designed to stretch the service member's paycheck; and that promises of a commissary benefit had been made to military enlistees and retirees.

Though the Philbin Subcommittee disparaged commissaries, it singled out exchanges for worse criticism. It recommended that all services refer to their service stores and exchanges as "exchanges," that exchange regulations be standardized, and that the exchanges generate profits for

recreation and welfare funds. The committee also recommended that the price differential between post exchanges and retail businesses be narrowed by including in the cost of exchange operations all utilities, maintenance, and equipment.

This part of the report, or at least the sentiment it expressed, helped inspire the creation of the Armed Services Commissary Regulation, which took the idea of exchange commonality and created standardization between the services' commissary stores. It also prompted the institution of the commissary surcharge three years later.

The report concluded by reiterating that many commissaries and exchanges were needlessly operating in close proximity to commercial facilities that were adequate, conveniently available, and reasonably priced. On a more positive note, it correctly stated there was inequity between the services as to who was eligible to shop at exchanges and commissaries, that there were wide variations in regulations governing exchanges and commissaries, and that uniform regulations would be desirable.

The Philbin Report would later be cited and used as a basic assumption by future commissary opponents, who accepted the statements as true without conducting further investigation. Among those who would later cite the report would be the Grace Commission of 1983-84, which would recommend privatization.

Besides adopting a new regulation covering all the services' commissaries, the Philbin Subcommittee was able to force other concessions from the armed services. These were the closure of two dozen stores, and an agreement that "luxury" items would not be stocked at the commissaries.

The definition of a luxury item was surprisingly restrictive. For example, dinner candles were allowable, since they could be used for light during power failures; but birthday candles were disallowed, as they were considered nonessential, and were therefore luxuries. Years later, when stock lists grew to thousands of items, birthday candles would once again be sold. But in the days following World War II, they were definitely out.

In August 1949, an exchange of letters between Assistant Secretary of the Navy John T. Koehler and Congressman Philbin agreed that certain commissaries in urban areas would be closed, since they "were not needed" and were "competing with civilian stores." Twenty-four commissaries that were in or near towns or cities would be closed, and it seemed that this was just the beginning.

In March 1950, Congressman Carl Vinson (D-Georgia) received confirmation from the secretaries of the Army (Gordon Gray), Navy (Francis P. Matthews), and Air Force (W. Stuart Symington) that twentyfour commissaries had indeed been closed per the August agreement between Philbin and the armed services. In all, eleven Army, nine Navy, and four Air Force stores were closed (see Appendices).

However, the service secretaries continued to make their displeasure known, telling Vinson, "the Department of Defense viewed as serious the detrimental effect on morale, welfare, and the additional financial burdens which have been imposed upon our enlisted men as a result of the disestablishment of commissary stores."

The Defense Department proposed a review of all commissary stores, to include a study of the advisability of reopening any of the twenty-four targeted stores, and held that if a particular military department found the closing of a store had worked a hardship on military personnel, the service could reopen that store.

Many people stood to lose. "The impact of the closing of commissaries on the serviceman is substantial," the secretaries said, noting the commissary benefit had been "early written into law." The recent Hook Commission had "thoroughly considered" the commissary benefit and did not consider it in any way to be unusual or superior to privileges available to members of civilian businesses, such as employee discounts. Closing just two dozen stores had already harmed not only active-duty personnel, but also retirees, disabled veterans, and family members of deceased veterans, to whom commissary privileges had recently been extended.

Not only were many of these people war veterans, but they and their spouses were also voters, the implications of which the Defense Department understood, even if it was not directly dependent upon their votes.

The secretaries concluded, "Any proposal substantially to alter the basic commissary statutes should be implemented only by formal congressional action to amend or rescind the laws." In other words, the services wished to close no more stores and make no more policy changes without accompanying legislation.

THE BIRTH OF AIR FORCE COMMISSARIES

While proponents of the commissary benefit fought for its survival, the Air Force began to assert control over stores that had formerly belonged to the Army. The old Army Air Forces had become a separate service—the modern Air Force—on September 17, 1947. For a while, Air Force commissary stores were still supported by the Army Quartermaster Corps. Even when the Air Force established a Services Division in 1951, its commissary sales stores were still under the quasi-control of the nearest Army quartermaster depot. By the mid-1950s, Air Force bases were gradually taking over everyday supervisory duties, under the general supervision of the major commands.

The Air Force Services Division was the technical arm of the Air Force Headquarters policy staff for food services, commissaries, subsistence, clothing stores, base exchanges, marketing, redistribution (salvage), mortuary affairs, and graves registration. In 1952 it was headquartered in Dayton, Ohio, home of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and the Air Materiel Command. It was placed there, rather than in Washington, D.C., as part of the strategy to disperse vital military functions to areas away from the nation's capital.

At that point, the Air Force commissaries supplied food to on-base dining and troop issue facilities, and sold foodstuffs to installation organizations. Individual customers were low on the list of concerns. Commissary sales stores on Air Force

bases remained primitive, operating in old warehouses or hangars, just as the Army had used old storehouses and stables.

THE ARMED SERVICES COMMISSARY REGULATION

As mentioned earlier, one result of the Philbin hearings was the creation of the Armed Services Commissary Regulation. The regulation came from an agreement between the armed services and the Subcommittee, and went into effect on October 1, 1949. It standardized the commissary stock list and terminology for all the armed services, and specified qualifica-

tions for commissary patrons. Each service could maintain its own commissary procedures when they didn't conflict with this regulation.

Commissaries lost their exemption to the federal excise tax, and had to accept restrictions the government placed on the stock list. Also in accordance with the subcommittee's wishes, the new regulation specified, "commissary stores would not be authorized in areas where adequate commercial facilities are conveniently available and sell commissary merchandise at reasonable prices."

However, "adequate commercial facilities," "conveniently located" and "reasonable prices" were terms open to interpretation, and the wording of the regulation would remain a source of contention for some time to come.

THE SURCHARGE

During the Korean War, Congress, again taking its cue from the Philbin Subcommittee, included in the Department of Defense Appropriations Act for 1952 a requirement that a surcharge be collected at all Army commissaries beginning January 1, 1952. The point was that the commissaries needed to start becoming self-sustaining. Customers had to pay the cost of mer-

chandise (purchase price plus transportation costs), with the surcharge paying for operating equipment, supplies, utilities, and merchandise losses and spoilage. This legislation was at least partly due to pressure from civilian retail groups.

A 3-percent surcharge was soon applied at all the services' continental United States (CONUS) commissaries and 3.5 percent overseas. The rate would vary over the years and was computed in different ways by each of the services. Unlike the experimental surcharge of 1879, the new surcharge had come to stay.

For the time being, appropriated funds

still paid operating and transportation costs overseas. Expenses not paid by customers or by the surcharge were borne by the military departments. These costs included pay and allowances for employees; facilities, including store rental; and procurement, inspection, receiving, warehousing, disbursing, accounting, and administrative functions.

With the anti-commissary atmosphere prevailing in Congress, the surcharge was essentially established in an effort to preserve the benefit by making the stores pay for themselves. If the stores succeeded, they could be preserved. In any event,



commissaries would no longer offer as great a savings as they once had. It wouldn't be until 1957 that a Defense Advisory Committee on Professional and Technical Compensation would recommend against trying to make commissaries entirely self-supporting.

THE STRAUSS COMMISSION

In 1952, responding to questions from the Senate Armed Services Committee, Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett convened the Commission on Incentive-Hazardous Duty and Special Pays. Lovett instructed the committee chairman, Rear Adm. Lewis L. Strauss, to make recommendations as to the form such pay should take. Strauss was an influential figure in Washington, having been a personal friend and secretary to Herbert Hoover, and an advisor to President Truman, Navy Secretary Frank Knox, and to James Forrestal, when Forrestal had been the undersecretary of the Navy. Strauss had served on numerous defense-related boards and commissions, and later became acting secretary of commerce and chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. It was largely due to his influence that the



1952: ENT Air Force Base, Colorado. This commissary at Ent Air Force Base was typical for the era. Placed in a medium-sized warehouse with separate entrance and exit, it wasn't glamorous, but it was a marked improvement over the cramped structures that had housed most commissaries before 1945. The Cooperator, Army Times Publications

United States would develop the Hydrogen Bomb.

Like the Hook Commission a few years earlier, the Strauss Commission looked favorably upon commissaries. It noted that the Hook Commission had considered whatever benefit the servicemen derived from the stores when their pay scale had been adopted. Strauss warned that Congress should be very reluctant to make any major changes to programs that had long been part of the service career system.

Strauss may have had some positive influence. In 1952, the Senate noted that the commissary privilege was one of the

benefits of, and inducements to, military service. Taking the benefit away would amount to a major pay reduction.

However, 1952 was an election year, and when Dwight D. Eisenhower won the presidency, he became the first Republican to occupy the White House since 1932. The change in administrations rendered the Hook and Strauss Commissions largely inconsequential. In fact, the Strauss Commission's report, Differential Pays for the Armed Services of the United States, was never formally submitted to the Senate Armed Services Committee.

"Unfair government competition" had long been a pet peeve among fiscal conservatives in both parties, who during the Depression had criticized some New Deal programs as unnecessary government forays into the private sector. Now, the ascendancy of a new administration and the cease-fire in Korea gave them a chance to reduce perceived excesses in the military budget.

Eisenhower had been a soldier most of his life, yet during his first term, military commissaries came under close scrutiny and frequent attack. Some members of the 83rd Congress were openly antagonistic toward military resale activities. Their laissez-faire philosophy appealed to all who believed that government was at its best when it least interfered with the private sector. To them, there was no reason for the government to run retail operations like the commissaries which, seemingly, could just as well be run by private enterprise.

Considering the military community's gallant service and sacrifice from 1941 to 1953, House Bill 5969, proposed in July



1950: PACIFIC FREEZER STOCKING. Employees stock a freezer somewhere in the Pacific or East Asia. The worker at this unidentified store seems to be stacking tubs of ice cream. Technology had come a long way since the days when ice had been obtained by teams of men cutting ice from a river or lake and then storing it in stone-lined pits and storage facilities. The luxuries taken for granted by modern servicemen had not even been dreamt of by the military of the nineteenth century. Military Market, Army Times Publications

1953, seemed strangely mean-spirited. It denied war widows access to the commissary, and implied veterans and retirees could also be denied the benefit. A furious letter-writing campaign forced those provisions to be dropped, but attacks upon the benefit would continue in other forms.

THE HARDEN SUBCOMMITTEE

In June 1953, the House Government Operations Subcommittee—better known as the Harden Subcommittee, headed by Rep. Cecil M. Harden (R-Indiana)—began hearings on alleged competition by government business-like activities with private enterprise. During the subcommittee's sessions, the National Supermarket Institute and the Food Distributors of Greater Washington testified against the commissaries. Other local retailers' associations, from Norfolk to San Diego, joined the offensive.

The retailers seem to have had plenty of support from Congress. As the subcommittee called witnesses, it found numerous congressmen were publicly sympathetic to the retailers. Throughout 1953, there was a continuous assault on commissaries by certain elements of the private sector. When three witnesses from the Government Accounting Office (GAO) presented unfavorable testimony on the justification and need for commissaries, the hearings soon became contentious.

Defense Department witnesses testified in favor of the existing system, citing morale and questioning the conclusions reached by the GAO. Army Maj. Gen. Boniface Campbell testified that reducing or abolishing commissaries would be, in effect, a cut in pay for everyone in uniform. Maj. Gen. W. P. T. Hill, Marine Corps quartermaster, said that private grocery stores, whether freed of price competition provided by the commissaries or brought on posts to operate as a monopoly, would "gouge" service personnel.

Congress found itself under increasing pressure by the American Retail Federation to close all CONUS stores. For a few months, Congress considered doing so. The only exceptions would be those stores so far from any city or town that there was nowhere else for the patrons to shop. It seemed the critics would succeed in closing most stateside commissaries.

Veterans' organizations and the promilitary media called upon their members and readers to mount a massive letter-writing campaign to Congress. The Harden Subcommittee and the House Appropriations Committee both resisted pressure to limit commissary operations. Congress had considered closing an additional fifty-two stateside commissaries but, faced with this opposition, chose to defer this action until the following year.

Just when the commissaries seemed to have escaped, the Senate Appropriations Committee unexpectedly succumbed to retailers' pressure. The retail lobby had achieved a coup: a last-minute rider to the Defense Appropriations Bill for 1954 that escaped the notice of pro-commissary people. The rider stipulated the secretary of defense had to annually certify that every commissary in the United States was truly necessary. Each store would have to pass muster on its own merits. It also cleared the way for civilian enterprise to run on-base commissaries. Potentially, it could have opened the door to twentieth-century sutlers and post traders.

The rider said: "No appropriation ... shall,

after December 31, 1953, be available in connection with the operation of commissary stores within the continental United States unless the secretary of defense has certified that items normally procured from commissary stores are not otherwise available at a reasonable distance and a reasonable price in satisfactory quality and quantity to the military and civilian employees of the Department of Defense; provided, that commissary stores are hereby authorized to be operated by private persons and privately onned organizations under such regulations as may be approved by the secretary of defense."

AN ALL-OUT BATTLE

The rider elicited an immediate, outraged response by commissary advocates, both in and out of Congress. The "hated rider," as *The Cooperator* described it, would become a fixture of the Defense Appropriations bill and would remain a point of contention.

Commissaries were not without their influential friends, and thousands of customers knew how to write letters. Soon, an all-out battle ensued.

In print, *The Cooperator* charged that the rider had been "sneakily slid into a late appropriations law after the proper military committees had turned it down following careful hearings." The periodical quoted a confidential memo distributed by an anti-



1952: ELMENDORF Air Force Base, Alaska. Opening day for the new commissary attracted a large crowd willing to stand in line in chilly weather in order to shop in a store that was a significant upgrade on their previous commissary. The Elmendorf store was so crowded on paydays that the store staff felt as if all four thousand local patrons had descended upon them in a single day. The Cooperator, Army Times Publications

commissary private retailing association from Norfolk, Virginia, that said "things have taken a nice turn in the commissary fight ... we have just learned in Washington there is more than one way to skin the cat ... we are working hard and furiously behind the scenes on this latest development." Once made public, this statement harmed the retailers' cause.

THE CERTIFICATION ISSUE

The appropriations bill rider stipulated that no appropriations would be available to CONUS commissary stores unless the military could certify that items available at commissaries were not otherwise available at a reasonable distance and price. But no guidance was issued as to what was considered *reasonable*.

The Defense Department decided that anything exceeding a 20-percent markup on a standard market basket at commercial supermarkets near commissary locations was to be considered unreasonable. A standard market basket consisted of 82 to 88 standard items and quantities that represented the annual purchases of an average family, as computed by the U.S. Department of Labor. The Defense Department stated that a recommendation of using higher mark-up figures would "constitute another instance of denying a long-established and accepted benefit, and another abrogation of a tacit contract on enlistment."

The bill was the culmination of the various committee hearings during the summer. Since the Philbin and Harden subcommittees had both erroneously assumed that the commissaries had been intended solely for remote posts, the Philbin Subcommittee persistently targeted commissaries in areas where commercial stores already existed.

Defense Secretary Charles F. Wilson was to certify by December 31, 1953, all those commissaries that were necessary to assure military personnel of adequate service at reasonable cost. No military funds were to be used to operate any commissaries unless the secretary certified that married personnel and their families would suffer "undue hardship" if their store was closed. CONUS commissaries were surveyed to obtain data as a basis for the secretary's certification.

One national publication (Business Week) noted that the effort to scrutinize commissaries was being spearheaded by "such groups as the National Association of Food Chains" as well as the anti-commissary American Retail Federation. Business Week noted the NAFC had identified six commissaries in the Washington, D.C., area as examples of "commissaries operating within shouting distance of large private markets." Ever since, similar groups have used commissaries in the Washington area to justify similar conclusions without considering the high cost of





CHILDREN AND COMMISSARIES.

Before World War II, young children were not allowed in most commissaries, but those stores provided nurseries to baby-sit the children while their parents shopped. TOP PHOTO: In 1961, the Sagamihara Housing Complex commissary in Japan had a separate waiting room for children. Overseas, the "no children on the sales floor" rule was frequently relaxed, but stores still offered baby-sitting services to give beleaguered parents a chance to shop in peace. At Augsburg, Germany, there was a nursery staffed by a nursemaid and decorated with paintings of Mickey Mouse and other cartoon characters, rendered by members of the store's staff.

BOTTOM PHOTO: At Fort Lewis, Washington, a nursery provided cribs for infants and activities for older children. This service was limited to ninety minutes. These nurseries were sometimes free, and, when they were not, they were certainly inexpensive. In 1953, the Hadnot Point store (Camp Lejeune, North Carolina) offered a baby-sitting service, provided by the staff of the NCO wives' club. They charged a fee of 25 cents for the first child, and 10 cents for every other child from the same family, for the duration of the parent's shopping trip.

Later, commissary nurseries and baby-sitting services disappeared, but full-fledged day care facilities became common on installations everywhere. Simultaneously, the rules against children were relaxed. Today, the rule is simple and mirrors that of the private sector: Children are allowed in the stores, but parents are expected to keep their children under control.

Top photo: Military Market, Army Times Publications; bottom: DeCA historical file

living in the nation's capital.

In August 1953, the same month the House passed the appropriations bill, *Business Week* predicted, "Betting is that a number of the 208 Army, Navy, and Air Force commissaries in the continental U.S. will shut down as a result." The question was, would civilian merchants take their place on military installations?

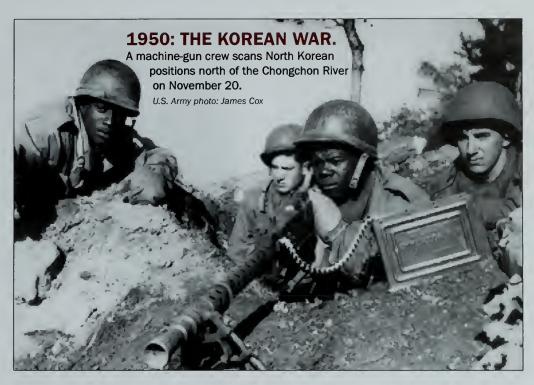
COUNTERATTACK

Commissary proponents fought back against the movement to close stores in the United States. Editorials ran in pro-military publications, announcing that the commissaries were in danger.

The basic anti-commissary argument was that the post commissaries were competing with civilian enterprises. This was untrue, and Congress eventually said so. Commissaries could not compete for the commercial stores' civilian customers, but civilian stores could sell to the military. It was impossible for the commissaries to steal civilian customers from commercial markets, but civilian retailers could indeed induce military customers to go off-post and shop in their stores. This controversy essentially came down to who, exactly, was competing with whom?

Throughout the crises of 1945-53, patrons wrote thousands of letters to publications and congressmen in support of commissaries. Especially interesting were comments by two enlisted men at Camp Gordon, Georgia, writing to *The Cooperator* in opposition to the establishment of civilian businesses on post. Their argument was based, at least in part, upon the lessons of history:

"At the present level of compensation for Army service, the only thing that makes it possible for the average Regular Army soldier to live at a decent standard is the lower prices of our cooperatives (commissaries and post exchanges). ... [We're] sure that a search of the records will reveal the original reasons for the abandonment of the old sutlers' stores and the reasons for the establishment of the first PXs and commissaries. This information presented to the investigation committees could have some influence toward changing the antici-



pated order to establish civilian-ownedand-operated concessions on Army posts."

It had taken two enlisted men, presumably with far less formal education than the people to whom they were addressing their remarks, to call attention to the historical record. For some reason, commissary history was seldom mentioned by anyone, and least of all by the friends of the commissaries, who stood the most to gain from an open discussion of that record.

History proved that commissaries had not been meant only for remote posts. Civilian vendors had been booted off the posts long before because too many of them had shown themselves to be greedy or their products were either flawed or overly expensive. It was something that was often left unsaid, but the armed forces were in no hurry to welcome them back.

'I'LL BREAK HIS DAMNED NECK!'

The commissary benefit did have some able defenders and visionaries. The 1953 report of the Committee on Incentive, Hazardous Duty and Special Pay gave the commissary controversy a new twist by observing that military personnel were in theory able to bargain with their employer (the United States). Therefore, "It is necessary that the Congress exercise great forethought in changing unfavorably the terms of employment for service personnel." Service members could "vote with their

feet" once their enlistments were up, and the United States could not afford a mass exodus from the ranks during the Cold War.

Other defenders did not mince their words. Their eloquent, sensible arguments, along with the letter-writing campaigns they inspired, helped to preserve the commissaries. Over fifty years later, the issues are much the same, and many of the pro-commissary positions are still valid. For instance, an editorial in *The Cooperator* in August 1953, said in part:

"The attacks on commissary stores by retail pressure groups point up a pertinent query. Exactly what is it these groups are attempting to destroy? A store? A building? An activity?

"Actually a commissary store is people ... people in uniform serving our country to preserve its cherished way of life—even for retailers who attack them. It may soothe the consciences of pressure groups to regard their attacks against an impersonal thing like the generic words, commissary or post exchange, which in themselves conjure no picture of human beings. ... In reality they are fighting the little service man and his family, insidiously destroying his will to enthusiastically serve his country through constant harassment and demoralization. Would public retailers be proud of the tactics of their high-priced lobbyists in Washington? Probably not!

"... Young married personnel with a small family, or perhaps a child on the way, find morale boosts in the easing of pressure on the 'pocket-book' nerve. For them, the ever-present problem is

These [commissary] savings can be transtion of the kids, a new dress for the wife, replacement of the savings are returned to civilian stores in town. These are a few of the things troubling the minds of the young married personnel in the service.

"Little by little, creeping infringement upon the privileges of servicemen was destroying the attractiveness of the military as a career, and impinging upon the high standards of performance of the armed forces. The man in uniform has been income taxed, excise-taxed, and surtaxed. Medical care for his dependents has been curtailed, education for his children has been under fire; promotions have many inequalities. His PX purchases have been seriously restricted and now commissary savings eliminated. A Congress, bent on economy, and under pressure by avid retailers, has handled cutbacks on little guys in uniform with a delicacy that could come only from a butcher's cleaver.

"We heard an old sergeant with many years in service and about to allow his re-enlistment to lapse, say, 'If my son makes an attempt to enlist in the Army, I'll break his damned neck.' A lieutenant general presently stationed in the United States remarked, 'The only thing they have not taken away from the soldier is his priv-

ilege to go to the latrine.' This very human officer said that one of the saddest duties he has ever had to perform in his long years of service was to order widows of men killed in combat out of the commissaries. ... Then there is the curtailment of commissary privileges, established almost two hundred years ago, to disabled war veterans, who have lost their health in the service of our country. Retired personnel served their country most of their lives at low base pay, with the government's promise at the time of enlistment, that commissary privi-

leges would continue after retirement. The elimination of commissaries casts serious doubts on the good faith of a government which [sic] changes rules in the middle of the game."

All this animosity was inspired by controversy not simply over the rider to the Appropriations bill as passed by the House (and thoroughly despised by the military), but what the rider portended: the eventual end of the benefit. What the civilian lobby was after was plain: In 1954, commissary



1953: WHITE SANDS, New Mexico. This store, one of the most remote in the United States, was an absolute necessity to people stationed on the post. Note that moving belts for checkouts had not yet arrived. *The Cooperator, Army Times Publications*

worldwide sales totals were expected to reach approximately \$306 million at the four services' 438 stores (199 in the states, 239 overseas). It's easy to see why certain members of the civilian grocery industry were anticipating an eventual windfall. No one knew how grocery sales would be carried out overseas if the commissaries did not exist, but the private sector seemed unconcerned. That was Congress' problem. The business of the retailers was to make a profit, and eliminating domestic commissaries would further that aim.

The controversy became nasty as procommissary publications took up the challenge. Their rancor seems surprising in today's era of political correctness. There was no such restraint in 1953. Editorial cartoons depicted retail lobbyists as large pigs dressed as robber barons, complete with vests and top hats. It was only eight years since the end of World War II, and friends of the military apparently had no qualms about telling their opponents exactly what they thought of them. Probably the fact that fifty million people had recently been killed in the war made a few direct insults seem like nothing at all.

The military was something that the American people respected and understood, many of them having recently had a close acquaintance with it. They realized that if the military was going to be asked to keep the peace around the world, then its



1950: COROZAL, Panama. The big Corozal store, pictured here around 1950, was housed in a former warehouse next door to a central distribution center. This commissary was within walking distance of the Panama Canal. Opened in 1948, this store would serve several generations of commissary customers before closing in 1999. DeCA historical file

families deserved better than what Congress seemed intent upon giving them.

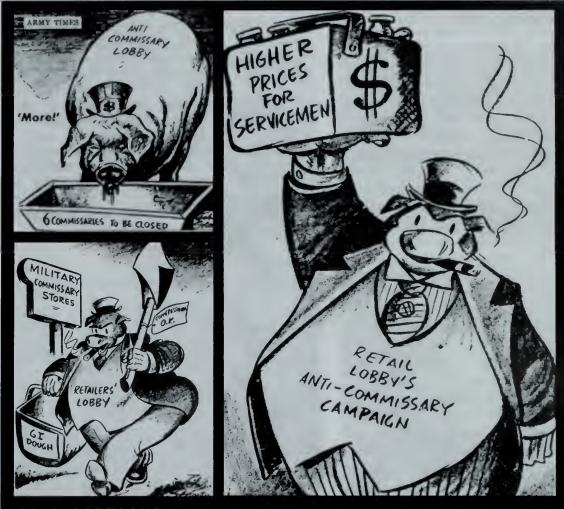
While commissary backers were vociferous, their adversaries were just as vocal and persistent. At one point it seemed the critics were on the threshold of closing the commissaries entirely. For a few months in 1953, all CONUS commissaries were slated to be shut down, except for those that were so far from any city or town that there was no other place for the patrons to shop.

In the end, the Senate saved the day, responding to the letter-writing campaign and a general uproar among military families. Besides not wishing to face the wrath of those families, the Senate reasoned that the best way to pay for remote installations' stores was by using surcharge dollars from urban-area commissaries. That was enough to scuttle the attempt to close all domestic commissaries. The rider remained on the books, but it had lost its edge.

So it had turned out that prediction was a tricky business; the prognostications of *Business Week* had been wrong, and the commissaries would still be in place for at least another fifty years.

Several stores were indeed forced to close in 1954, due primarily to pressure from retail groups, and the secretary of defense was still required to annually justify the existence of every commissary. One closure was the Navy's store at the Brooklyn, New York, Navy Yard, which, according to *Military Market* magazine, had closed "due to pressure from retail groups." But the danger that all of the stores would be immediately closed was reduced, for the time being.

The challenge of 1953 had been the most dangerous threat in the history of the commissary benefit to that time. The logic and arguments used in the attack



1953: CARTOONS. Army Times, top left photo, The Cooperator, lower left and right. Commissary defenders were unabashedly outspoken and pulled no punches. Their opponents showed no mercy, either. Army Times Publications

are very much the same as those used in subsequent pushes for commissary privatization or eradication. So too, the procommissary arguments, which are every bit as effective.

'BE CONSIDERATE OF YOUR COMMISSARY OFFICER'

While controversy raged in Washington, the commissaries somehow managed to keep functioning.

Shortly after the outbreak of war in Korea, an article in *The Quartermaster Review* described the status of commissary sales stores:

"Be considerate of your commissary officer; his is a tough job. He tries to operate his store along the lines of a commercial supermarket, but there the resemblance ends. A commercial store is out to make a profit, but the commissary store must neither make a profit nor lose money. In a commercial store the customer is always

right, but in a commissary store the management must retain the good will of his customer yet must verify all complaints before taking action. With few exceptions, Army commissary buildings were not designed as retail stores. Through quartermaster ingenuity and engineer ability, various types of Army buildings have been converted into efficient commissary stores, well-equipped, and rendering fast, accurate service with a minimum of personnel....

"Over a period of time ... the commissary patron saves the average commercial mark-up plus the amount saved through central purchasing. These combined savings should exceed 20 percent. ... Commissary privileges of the military are established by law and recognized as part of their pay. It is also recognized that abuse of this privilege violates the rights of the taxpaying commercial grocer. ...

"Current regulations authorize a total of 260 items [for sale in a commissary store], with a reasonable selection of each."

111 commercial store in excess of ten mina and time (by private vehicle) and fifteen (by public conveyance) from the commisand was to be considered "unreasonably distant."

ESTABLISHING COMMISSARIES

Despite its retail function, a commissary operated primarily to supply subsistence to the troops. "Issue commissaries" were still considered the primary mission, just as they had been in 1867. A given commissary might not include a commissary sales store. Normally, neither issue commissaries nor commissary sales stores were operated in combat areas. There, rations were distributed on the basis of a daily request submit-

ted by the combat units to a ration distribution point. Commanding officers of Army posts could authorize establishment of an issue commissary, but only the secretaries of the respective services could authorize establishment of a commissary store in the United States. However, major overseas commanders did have the authority to establish issue commissaries and commissary sales stores.

Such was the state of the art in 1950, but the stores were changing quickly. A sign that the prewar commissaries were gone for good was the fact that by January 1952, most commissaries overseas were stocking pet food. This was an indication of the growth in pet ownership by military families and the growth of the pet food industry. A few stores in the United States had stocked pet food for some time, but now the practice was widespread.

At the same time, some of the old methods that customers had found advantageous began to disappear. For example, all commissaries in Panama that were patronized by the military stopped accepting coupon books as of mid-January 1952. Customers in Panama would have to pay in cash or with a check. This was a preview for what was to come elsewhere.

Within a few years, commissaries



everywhere would begin switching to "cash and carry" in order to cut down on paperwork and overhead. Individual credit accounts, which had been a popular way of commissaries doing business since 1867, were being eliminated.

FROM BABY FOOD TO SELF-SERVICE

When the country demobilized after World War II, cutting its troop strength by nearly eleven million, there was suddenly no need for the many makeshift commissary stores that had sprung up during the war. In San Francisco, almost every installation in the bay area had its own store, but most of them were closed in 1946. At that point, the store at the Presidio of San Francisco began serving customers from all over the area. The resulting customer base amounted to about six thousand families in all; they were served five days a week. Two-thirds of these families were active duty.

The average serviceman's marital status had changed since 1867. A sure sign that commissaries were serving a different clientele was that one of the Presidio store's best-selling item categories was baby food. The store carried it in seventy-five varieties.

For ninety minutes each day, only military personnel in uniform were allowed in the store, a practice that cut down considerably on store congestion at all hours of operation, and enabled on-duty personnel to shop during their lunch hour, unencumbered by long lines. Variations on this practice remained common for years, and today most stores still give uniformed personnel preferential treatment with special checkout

lines, or with rules that permit them to go to the head of the line during lunch time.

Shortly after the end of World War II, the self-service concept that had spread to many of the civilian and military stores within the United States started to become popular at overseas commissaries. Logically, it was only a matter of time before it caught on everywhere. With stores increasing in size, there was no way to staff a store adequately to give every customer personalized service. Self-service was widely regarded as the wave of the future. In certain stores and departments, customers could still get served by a meat cutter or a produce manager, but once they placed their goods in the grocery basket and moved on, they had to serve themselves the rest of the way.

The quartermaster general initiated selfservice meat markets on an experimental basis at Army commissaries in 1952. In addition to the traditional personalized service, in which meats were cut according to each customer's specifications, the stores offered pre-packaged meats, cut and prewrapped at the stores. Most civilian stores had been using the self-service, prepackaged concept for years. The idea was to speed up service and end the bottleneck that plagued the meat department of every commissary. When the experiment ended, the Army adopted a new policy to provide prepackaged meat at stores doing \$45,000 or more in monthly business.

Returnable soft drink bottles, for which the customer received a few cents' deposit return per bottle, had been used in commissaries and civilian markets for years. They caused a crisis in 1953 because they were not being returned in adequate numbers to either the commissaries or the exchanges. Many stores were losing a lot of money.

The stores put together a public relations campaign aimed at retrieving the bottles, and eventually the crisis eased. Still, this was a burdensome, dirty job. It took time and effort to collect and store the bottles. Those that were returned to the store unrinsed, the insides coated with sugar, attracted insects. No one would mind much when the job began disappearing in the mid-1980s, when the emphasis would shift to recycling aluminum cans and plastic bottles.

STATE-OF-THE-ART STORE, 1952

In July 1952, Fort Benning, Georgia, opened a large commissary in the middle of the main post. It covered 19,528 square feet, had a staff of fifty-nine (including two officers and eighteen enlisted men), used ten cash registers, served ten thousand families, had a paved parking lot for two hundred cars, and did an average of \$16,000 in daily sales. This figure may not sound like much by twenty-first century standards, but in 1952 the basic military pay was \$78 per month. In those days the dollar stretched much further than it does today. "Refrigerated cabinets," deep-well freezing compartments, and twenty gondola-type, eye-level food-counter displays were state-of-the-art. The commissary did not rely on market centers; its produce was procured locally.

At that time, most commissaries, including Fort Benning's, did not allow children under age ten into the store, but many pro-

1948: CASH REGISTERS. An old

stores control machine for tracking inventory (left) and a new cash register (right) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Standard equipment in commissaries for many years, stores control machines tracked inventory—"stores" referred to stock, not the building—and doubled as cash registers. Photos in this book show them in use at West Point, New York, in 1937-38 and at Brooks Field, Texas, in 1943. The ponderous, old machines were replaced by the new, smaller cash registers in the 1950s, but they had once been cutting-edge technology, a distinct step up from the days of pen, paper, and carbon paper.





vided some sort of child care facility for the convenience of the patrons. The new Fort Benning store had a children's nursery that was run by the post chaplain's office and accommodated up to 125 children a day for periods ranging from ten minutes to an hour.

In 1952, the Hadnot Point commissary at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, joined Fort Benning in offering a similar service. It was provided by the staff of the NCO wives' club for a fee of 25 cents for the first child, and 10 cents for every other child from the same family. This was the total charge for the duration of the parents' shopping trips, and it was a real bargain.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Amidst the running controversies of these years, it is a mystery how the people running the commissaries managed to maintain their sense of humor and still have the spirit to make shopping an enjoyable experience for the customers. In one instance, Capt. Rex S. Morgan, commissary officer at Camp Haugen, Japan, encouraged sales by posting humorous signs designed to attract attention and elicit a few chuckles, using the same zany humor used by the Marx Brothers. For example, with the arrival of a long-awaited shipment of bananas, Morgan posted signs saying, "Those items that look like Bananas are Bananas and make very good Banana pies," and "Do not use Potatoes or Oranges for making Banana pie because they

will not make Banana pie like Bananas make Banana pie." Morgan's sense of humor paid off for both the patrons and the store; the shipment quickly sold out.

The following week a five-hundred-pound shipment of tomatoes arrived—the first tomatoes in seven months. Mor-gan's signs announced, "This way to the Haugen Tomato Festival; The celebration rivals in beauty, culture and antiquity the recent cherry blossom festival," and "Tomatoes, follow the arrows." The signs attracted attention, and the zeal with which they pounced on the tomatoes was reminiscent of the enthusiasm with which canned tomatoes had been consumed by soldiers in the nineteenth century.

Not surprisingly, the shipment quickly sold out, which was great news for the store, though it was definitely bad news for customers who came in a day late.

THE 'GENERALS AND ADMIRALS' PLOY

In March 1953, the Senate Armed Services Committee referred to Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson a complaint that Washington area commissaries were being operated contrary to existing law. The secretary replied that the stores were justified based upon the existing criteria and made reference to the importance of commissaries in military life. This issue seems to have marked the start of a new round of complaints and investigations into the commissaries, culminating with the passage of the Armed Forces Military

Appropriations legislation in 1953.

Washington-area stores in particular seemed vulnerable to attack because of their high visibility and the large number of high-ranking officers who patronized them. These stores provided easy targets for anyone wishing to accuse the commissaries of being exorbitant perks for people who had plenty of money and who didn't need the advantage of discount groceries that were financed by the taxpayers.

This accusation was revived every few years. Commissary opponents, who lobbied incessantly for the dismantling of the military's sales stores, typically courted new legislators unfamiliar with the commissary benefit. They used the "generals and admirals" ploy skillfully, never mentioning that the nation's capital was unrepresentative of a normal military population in any other area of the country, and ignoring the fact that many of those high-ranking officers had spent most of their careers as lower-grade officers and had earned their benefits as surely as anyone of lower rank.

Although the "generals and admirals" tactic has not been used recently, it will no doubt remain in the opponents' arsenal, awaiting the day when commissary advocates who are currently prepared to deal with such arguments are safely retired.

Knowing that the anti-commissary lobby can employ such tactics makes it of paramount importance for commissary customers and personnel to be aware of the history of the benefit.

CHRONOLOGY of KEY EVENTS

MAY 1945

THE NAVY FORMED a committee to examine its resale activities. This was known as the Bingham Committee, chaired by Capt. Wheelock H. Bingham, a Navy Reserve officer on duty at the Aviation Supply Depot in Philadelphia. The committee's report proposed that ships' service stores be transferred from the Bureau of Naval Personnel to the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts and that a strong central organization be established to eliminate the "unbusinesslike" approach of the existing decentralized operations. (NRS /Navy Resale System) News Digest, Apr 1986, p. 6; Navy Commissary Program, p. 2; NRS News Digest, p. 6)

1945

SEPT. 2, 1945

U.S. Military History: World War II ends with the formal surrender of Japan in a short ceremony aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay.

SEPTEMBER 1945 THE FIGHT of private retailers against service stores began after the war. The scales would start tipping for the private sector in 1949. ("Commissaries in Danger," Army Times, 15 Aug 1953)

SEPTEMBER 1945 U.S. MILITARY demobilization began immediately after the war. As Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett later said, "We did not just demobilize ... we just disintegrated." (Roger R. Trask, The Secretaries of Defense: A Brief History, 1947-1985, p. 17)

OCTOBER 1945

THE NAVY approved the Bingham Committee's recommendations. (Navy Commissary Program, p. 2)

OCT. 24, 1945

THE SELF-SERVICE system that had been started in the 1930s now became popular everywhere. Some commissaries had already been employing the method. It was all the rage on the West Coast, and the stores in Japan would soon follow suit. (Capt. Harry G. Dowdall, QMC, "A Self-Service Commissary," Quartermaster Review, Jan-Feb 1938)

NOV. 8, 1945

1946

THE BINGHAM Committee submitted its plan for accomplishing resale consolidation to the chief of the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts. (NRS News Digest, Apr 1976, p. 6)

1945

THE ARMY established its first two commissaries

department store downtown and in a new building, designed and built as a commissary, located in the family housing area in Grant Heights. (Quartermaster Review, May-Jun 1949, p. 131; Capt. C. L. Lynch,

master Museum Archives)

1946

DURING WORLD War II, almost every installation in the San Francisco Bay area had its own commissary, but most of the stores were closed in 1946. At that point, the store at the Presidio of San Francisco began serving customers from all over the area—about six thousand families. (The Cooperator, Apr 1953, p. 5)

in Japan. They were located in the Tokyo area in a

scrapbook and photo album, "Tokyo-Yokohama

Commissaries, 1946-48," in U.S. Army Quarter-

1946

1946

Food Business: Automats, particularly those run by Horn and Hardart in New York City, were the newest innovation in fast food. (NRS News Digest, Apr 1986, pp. 26-27)

Retail Technology: Orla E. Watson of Kansas City, Kansas, devised a telescoping shopping cart equipped with a hinged side that allowed the baskets to be telescoped together rather than disassembled and folded, like Sylvan Goldman's folding basket carriers. Watson's Western Machine Company made the first ones, which were put to use in Floyd Day's super market in 1947. (Jeanne Sklar, Telescoping Shopping Cart Collection, 2000, No. 739, on American History Archives Center Web site: Americanhistory.si.edu/archives/d8739.htm)

1946-1948

THERE WAS A BAG shortage at the Nasugbu Beach commissary in Japan. Customers were urged to bring their old shopping bags to the commissary. (U.S. Army Quartermaster Museum, Capt. C. L. Lynch album, "Tokyo-Yokohama Commissaries, 1946-48")

1946-1955

AIR FORCE and Army personnel stationed on Guam shopped in a large Quonset hut about five miles from Andersen Air Force Base, located in an Air Force area called Marbo, an acronym for the joint Marianas-Bonin command in the Marianas and Bonin Islands. In 1955, when commissary, exchange, and other services moved onto Andersen along with housing, Marbo became a



ghost town. ("Mission in the Marianas," *Quartermaster Review*, May-Jun 1949, pp. 129-30; "Modern Store with Real Old Fashioned Courtesy," *Military Market*, Nov 1955, pp. 32-33)

MARCH 1, 1946

THE SUBSISTENCE Research and Development Laboratory was renamed Quartermaster Food and Container Institute for the Armed Forces. (Risch, *Quartermaster Corps*, p. 175)

APRIL 1, 1946

JAMES V. Forrestal, secretary of the Navy, approved the new, centralized organization to consolidate Navy resale operations, the Navy Resale System (NRS). It included the Navy Ship's Store Office (NSSO), responsible for the Navy exchanges and commissaries. (NRS News Digest, Apr 1976, p.6; NRS News Digest, Apr 1986, p. 3)

APRIL 1, 1946

NAVY CAPT. T. L. Becknell Jr., Supply Corps, appointed officer in charge of the new Navy Ship's Store Office (NSSO). (Navy Commissary Program)

APRIL 3, 1946

THE NSSO Advisory Committee formed as NSSO's governing body, which would monitor,

guide, and make recommendations to NSSO. (Navy Exchange Service Command: 50 Years of Serving You, pp. 6-7)

APRIL 10, 1946

THE NAVY officially established NSSO. (*Navy* Resale System News Digest, Apr 1976, p. 4)

JULY 1946

THE NSSO moved to the block between 29th and 30th Streets on Third Avenue in Brooklyn, New York. It remained there until July 1981 (but not everyone moved out until January 1982). (NRS News Digest, Apr 1976, p. 6; NAVRESSO Weekly Bulletin, Apr 1 1986; 50 Years of Serving You, pp. 33-34)

JULY 13, 1946

U.S. *Military History:* Air University established at Maxwell Field, Alabama.

JULY 16, 1946

AN UNIDENTIFIED Signal Corps photographer reported that Capt. Milton E. Steinbring and his wife, from New Braunfels, Texas, shopped in a new commissary at Bad Nauheim, Germany. It was supposedly part of a new post exchange, which also included an ice cream bar, gift shop, a radio repair shop, and barber and beauty shops.

Whether or not this truly was a commissary is questionable. The important point, however, is that within fourteen months of the end of the war in Europe, spouses and children began to be stationed overseas, making commissary and PX shopping opportunities far more important. It may also provide yet another example of how the terms "PX" and "commissary" were often intertwined, both in fact and in everyday language. (National Archives photo No. 111SC-249300; originally ETO–HQ-46-4232)

1947

Food Business Technology: After Orla Watson introduced his telescoping shopping cart in Kansas City, Sylvan Goldman introduced the Nest-Cart, a shopping cart that stored easily by nesting together with other carts. Most modern shopping carts are based upon the principles these two carts employed. (Wilson, Cart, p. 103; Sklar, Shopping Cart Collection)

New Food Products: Pillsbury and General Mills introduced the first instant cake mixes; Richard Reynolds invented aluminum foil for wrapping food.

U.S. Military History: The National Security Act of 1947 unified the armed forces under the Department of Defense.

THE U.S. AIR FORCE was formed as a separate armed service. The Army Air Force's base commissaries came under control of the Air Force. (Cole, *Department of Defense*, pp. 35-50; National Security Act of 1947, 26 Jul 1947, Public Law 253, 80th Congress, Ch. 343, 1st Session, S. 758)

THE MUNITIONS Board Single Service Purchase Agreement formalized interservice subsistence purchases. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 135)

SECRETARY of Defense James V. Forrestal formed the Advisory Commission on Service Pay, commonly called the Hook Commission for its chairman, Charles R. Hook. The commission undertook the first comprehensive review of military compensation since 1908. It issued a report titled "Career Compensation for the Uniformed Services: A Report and Recommendation for the Secretary of Defense by the Advisory Commission on Service Pay." The report formed a basis for recommendations to Congress to restructure mil-

itary compensation.

The commission examined the logic and justifications of the entire system of military compensation, and completed what the Department of Defense considered the most important and fundamental studies of military compensation since World War II. It looked favorably upon the commissaries and noted that commissary benefits were taken into account when service-pay levels were set, concluding that if commissaries and other benefits were taken away, service pay would have to increase. (Department of Defense, Military Compensation Background Papers, Nov. 1991, p. 719. [Hereafter cited as Background Papers]. Also, see Department of Defense, Career Compensation for the Uniformed Services, 1949, entire [hereafter cited as Hook Report])

1948

THE ARMY Exchange Service was redesignated



1948

1948

as the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (A&AFES; later AAFES). (HASC #91-77, 12383)

Food Marketing: Beginning of the McDonalds' hamburger franchise and the Baskin-Robbins Ice Cream chain.

APRIL 1, 1948

PUBLICATION began of the Monthly Ships' Stores,
Commissary Stores, Ships' Service Stores Newsletter ... also
called Monthly NSSO Newsletter. It lasted until August
1959. (NRS News Digest, Apr 1986, p. 12)

Food, Politics, & Military Strategy: A Soviet land blockade of Berlin, Germany, prompted "Operation Vittles," the Berlin Airlift, during which U.S. and British planes airlifted 2.3 million

JULY 20, 1948

U.S. Military History: The postwar draft began as President Harry S. Truman called for ten million men.

tons of food and coal into Berlin.

AUGUST 1948 REAR ADM. A. A. Antrim, Supply Corps, replaced Capt. T. L. Becknell as officer in charge of NSSO. (Navy Commissary Program)

SEPTEMBER 1948 THE 210 COMMISSARY sales stores in the Continental United States (not including Alaska and Hawaii) consisted of 81 Army-run stores, 84 Air Force, 38 Navy, and seven Marine Corps. Sales for calendar year 1948 totaled \$75,694,135.62. (HASC Hearings, 1949, pp. 104, 3460-65; 1975 HR

1947

1947

JULY 26, 1947

SEPT. 17, 1947

DEC. 22, 1947

1947

Report, Information on Commissary Store Operations, p. 2; Continental United States is more properly read as Contiguous United States, meaning the lower fortyeight; CONUS as an acronym seems to have varying definitions for various services and time periods. For example, these numbers do not include any installations in Alaska, but later lists, including some published by DeCA after 1991, showed bases in Alaska and Hawaii as being in CONUS.)

Retail Technology: Sylvan Goldman and Orla

1949

1949

JANUARY 1949

Watson settled their dispute over their similar nesting and telescoping carts. Goldman was licensed to manufacture them, while Watson could claim sole ownership of the patent and would receive a royalty on every cart sold. (Sklar, Shopping Cart Collection)

THE NAVY RESALE System mission added responsibility for technical guidance and assistance to the ships' stores afloat. The functions of the ship's store division, established in 1944, were transferred to the Navy Resale System Office. (NRS News Digest, Apr 1976, p. 6)

THE FIRST of several commissary trains were created in Japan. Assigned to the 11th Airborne Division, these trains were placed in use because of adverse postwar conditions that prevented the use of existing buildings as commissaries. The trains provided mobile food stores on five routes on three of the four home islands: Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku. (QMR, Nov-Dec 1948, p. 73; May-



1948: OPERATION 'VITTLES.' In July, American units kept track of the flights and tonnage for each day of the Berlin Airlift, recording statistics for every flight. U.S. Air Forces Europe

Jun 1949, pp. 18-19, 129-34)

FEBRUARY 1949

THERE WERE sixty-one Army commissaries—set up as self-service stores—in Europe, serving about seventy-three thousand people. None of them could be called typical because of the wide variation in the types of available facilities in which they were set up. The Heidelberg, Germany, commissary was being established as a model store, with the eventual goal being "some degree of standardization" throughout Europe. (*QMR*, Jan-Feb 1949, p. 27)

FEB. 21, 1949

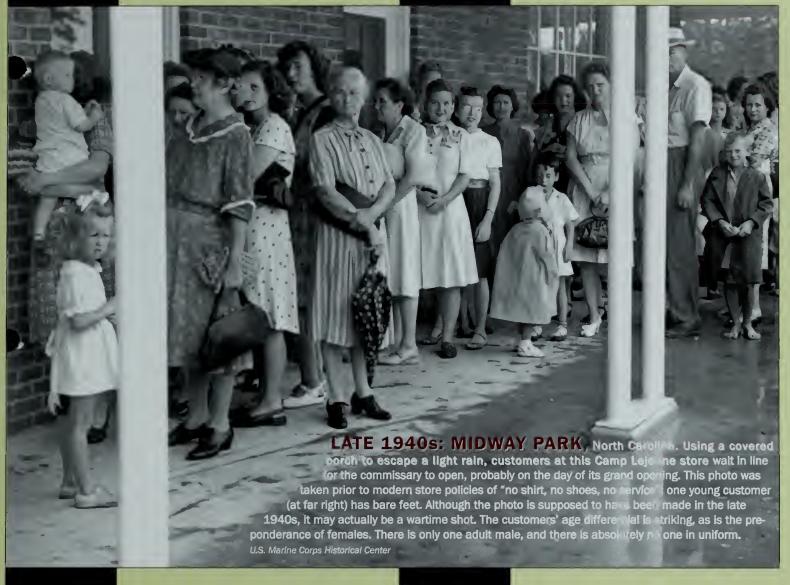
THE HOOK ADVISORY Commission on service pay testified before the House Armed Services Committee, stating their recommendations had taken hidden benefits such as hospitals, commissary and exchange privileges into consideration in devising its compensation proposals (Office of the Quartermaster General, 6 Jun 1954, Tab B)

APRIL 12 -JULY 28, 1949 THE HOUSE Armed Services Committee's Special Subcommittee on Resale Activities of the Armed Forces met, headed by Rep. Philip J. Philbin (D-Massachusetts). This subcommittee was also called "the Special Subcommittee on Exchanges and Commissaries," or simply "the Philbin Committee."

The subcommittee's report concluded commissaries and exchanges were actively and unfairly competing with established private business. It included numerous erroneous statements based upon an inaccurate view of history, ignoring the events and actual wording of the legislation establishing commissaries in 1866-67 and exchanges in 1895. It helped perpetuate the "remote posts" myth that had emerged in 1932. Unfortunately, it would later be cited as fact by the President's Commission on Privatization in 1983-84 [the Grace Commission]. (Report of Investigation of the Domestic Resale Activities of the Armed Forces, July 1949, p. 4001; Events, Atch 3, 12 Apr 1949; Hearings, Special Subcommittee on Resale Activities of the Armed Services, 1949, numbers 104, 106, 115, 119; Report of the Comptroller General of the U.S., Report to the Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States: Failure to Curtail Operation at Government Expense of Military Commissary Stores in Continental United States Where Adequate Commercial Facilities are Available, April 1964, pp. 7-8, 14-23)

APRIL 17, 1949

COL. JOHN T. Sprague, the commander of



Waco Air Force Base, Texas, noted commissaries were no threat to local merchants. The local newspaper noted the base was "a \$650,000 gold mine" for the local economy. (Waco *Tribune-Herald*, 17 Apr 1949)

MAY 1949

BY THIS TIME, the Army was supplying thirteen thousand families in Japan. In addition to the commissary trains mentioned previously (*see* **January 1949**), there were thirty-four "fixed-location" Army commissaries in Japan. Yokohama served as the major port of supply for all services. (*QMR*, May-Jun 1949, pp. 18-19, 129-34)

MAY 2, 1949

REP. CARL Vinson (D-Georgia), House Armed Services Committee chairman, ordered a probe of tax-free purchases being made by servicemen at commissaries and exchanges after complaints were made by civilian retailers and business associations of "unfair competition" from the military services. This began a series of similar events brought about by the retailers and associations involved. (Norfolk, Va., Virginian-Pilot, 3 May 1949)

JULY -AUGUST 1949 THE PHILBIN Committee forced concessions from the armed services that included a new regulation covering all the services' commissaries, the closure of twenty-four stores, and an agreement to not sell luxury items for commissary sale. (Quartermaster Review, Jul-Aug 1958, p. 73)

AUG. 2, 1949

JOHN T. Koehler, assistant secretary of the Navy, sent a letter to Congressman Philip J. Philbin saying certain commissaries in urban areas would be closed, agreeing they "were not needed" and "were competing" with commercial stores.

AUG. 22, 1949

A LETTER from Congressman Philip J. Philbin to **John T. Koehler** confirmed that some commissaries should be closed, primarily those in urban areas.

OCT. 1, 1949

THE ARMED Services Commissary Store Regulation went into effect. It standardized the stock list, terminology, and other criteria for all the armed services and specified qualifications for commissary patrons. Each service would

BEAS: CHERRY POINT.

North Carolina, Canned food bins were well-organized but considerably shorter than store shelving of the future. Still, this commissary at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point was a wonderful example for others in its use of open space and light. The local Marines justifiably took great pride in this facility. U.S. Marine Corps Historical Center



JUNE 1950

JUNE 25, 1950 -

JULY 27, 1953

JULY 6, 1950

maintain its own commissary procedures if they didn't conflict with this regulation. The regulation itself was the result of the agreement between the armed services and the Philbin Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee. (Armed Services Commissary Store Regulation (hereafter cited as ASCSR), p. 4 [DOD 1330.17]; ASCSR, Part 3, 1-301; Hearings, p. 412; Hucles, Haversack, p. 135)

OCT. 2, 1949 LEGISLATION passed that allowed service members to receive a basic cash allowance for subsistence when rations in kind were not available. (Dyer, Subsistence Supply, II-7; p. 37 USC 251)

1950

SHIPS' SERVICE stores became known as Navy exchanges, while ships' stores ashore were called commissary stores. (NRS News Digest, Apr 1976, p. 6)

Food Technology: Swanson introduced frozen TV dinners.

BY THIS DATE, commissary stores on military installations were to be designated as Army commissary stores, Navy commissary stores, Air Force commissary stores, and Marine Corps commissary stores. (ASCSR, 1949)

A LETTER to Congressman Carl Vinson from the secretaries of the Army (Gordon Gray), Navy (Francis P. Matthews), and Air Force (W. Stuart Symington) confirmed that twenty-four commissaries had been closed as per the August 22nd agreement between Rep. Philip J. Philbin and the armed services.

The secretaries were displeased and believed the disestablishment of these stores hurt morale. They asked for a full review of commissary stores, including the advisability of reopening any of the closed stores. They reminded Vinson that the closings affected not only the servicemen, but also retired and disabled personnel and family members of deceased veterans, to whom commissary privileges had only recently been extended. (See Appendices for a list of the closed stores.)

CAPT. J. L. Herlihy, Supply Corps, replaced Rear Adm. A. A. Antrim as officer in charge of NSSO. (Navy Commissary Program)

> U.S. Military History: The Korean War. The war began when North Korean military forces crossed the 38th Parallel to attack South Korea. The North Koreans captured the South Korean capital of Seoul before United Nations forces, led by the United States, pushed them back all the way to the border of Korea and China. By November 1950, China entered the war. For the next two years, the opposing forces waged indecisive combat until the United States, North Korea, and China signed an armistice agreement to end hostilities on the peninsula. However, South Korea never signed it because it regarded a divided Korea as unacceptable. A reported 54,246 American men and women

> U.S. Military History: Beginning of the Battle of the Pusan Perimeter, Korea.

died in the Korean War.

1950

1950

JAN. 1, 1950

MARCH 3, 1950

IANUARY 1951

REGULATIONS (SR 30-305-1, 2, and 3) authorized **260 items** [for sale in a commissary], "with a reasonable selection of each." (*Quartermaster Review*, Jan-Feb 1951, pp. 11, 141-45)

1951

MARCH -APRIL 1951

AFTER forty-five years of using coupon books, commissaries run by the Panama Canal Commission's (PCC) Commissary Division prepared to experiment with a cash-only sales policy at the Ancon commissary. The practice eventually extended to the railroad commissaries at Curundu, Cocoli, Pedro Miguel, and Gatun. Members of the American military and their families could shop at these commissaries, so the change in policy affected them as well as PCC employees. ("Cash Sales Start in Ancon Commissary," in Pan-

ama Canal Review, 2 Feb 1951; "And For the Last Time," Panama Canal Review, 4 Jan 1952)

JULY 16, 1951

AT A HEARING of the House Appropriations Committee, Vice Adm. Herbert Hopwood and the counsel for the Army comptroller both erroneously stated that "Commissaries were established first in remote areas for convenience and not for savings." Hopwood said it was "for convenience," and the counsel affirmed, "That was the original concept of it ... back in the old frontier days."

AUGUST 1951

THE AIR FORCE created its Services Division. The on-base commissary function was primarily that of supplying food to on-base dining facilities and supplying subsistence. In 1952, the division would move to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. In the 1960s, it relocated to the Philadelphia Quartermaster Depot. (Food News, 7 Aug 1951, p. 1; Unsigned AFCOMS memo, "Thoughts on Food News," in DeCA historical files)

OCT. 18, 1951

THE DOD Appropriations Act required that a surcharge be collected at all Army commissaries, beginning January 1, 1952. (Sec 628, Public Law 179, 82nd Congress, 1st Session)



1950: MEAT INSPECTION. Military veterinary technicians help assure commissary food standards are the best in the world. This was an inspection at McClellan Air Force Base, California. DeCA historical file

NOVEMBER 1951

CAPT. J. L. Herlihy of the Navy Ship's Store Office was promoted to rear admiral. (*Navy Commissary Program*)

DECEMBER 1951

CMDR. A. T. Magnell, Supply Corps, replaced Rear Adm. J. L. Herlihy as officer in charge of NSSO. (Navy Commissary Program)

1952

1952

THROUGHOUT this year, the quartermaster general initiated self-service meat markets on an experimental basis at Army commissaries, trying to end the bottleneck that plagued the meat department of nearly every store. As a result, a new policy provided prepackaged meat at Army stores doing monthly sales of \$45,000 or more. *Quartermaster Review*, Sep-Oct 1957, pp. 54, 57)

JANUARY 1952

CMDR. A. T. Magnell, officer in charge of Navy Ship's Store Office, was promoted to captain. (Navy Commissary Program)

JANUARY 1952

BY THIS MONTH (and probably even earlier) commissaries overseas were stocking pet food. Gaines Dog Food placed a contract for a series of advertisements in the European editions of

1952

JAN. 1, 1952

Army/Air Force Times. (The Cooperator, Jan 1952)

THE SURCHARGE established by Congress on goods sold at commissaries began on this date. Commissary customers paid the cost of merchandise (purchase price and transportation), while the surcharge paid for operating equipment, supplies, utilities, and merchandise losses and spoilage. The surcharge was 3.5 percent overseas and 3 percent in the continental United States.

Over the next few years, the surcharge varied between different services as well as overseas versus stateside locations. Navy and Marine Corps stores added a percentage to the cost of each item, and the percentage was higher on some items than on others. Army and Air Force stores charged a straight percentage after totaling the price of all goods at the register. (Office of the Quartermaster General, collection of unpublished papers, "Commissary Stores," 6 Jan 1954; hereafter, cited as OOMG 6 Jan 1954, followed by the title of the individual paper; in this case, 'Summary of Accounting Systems,' p. 1; Hearings, p. 412; Value of the Commissary Privilege, p. 9; Military Market, August 1955, p. 47; Comptroller General's report, Apr 1964)

IN PANAMA, commissaries at Balboa, Diablo Heights, Gamboa, Cristobal, and Margarita replaced their old coupon system with the new cash-only system; other PCC commissaries had

1952: ELMENDORF Air Force Base, Alaska. The store's six cash registers would have been more than adequate at other posts, but at Elmendorf there was difficulty keeping pace with the number of customers. The store staff, knowing the store was vital to people on America's northernmost frontier, made a concerted effort to reduce not-in-stocks. Grocery deliveries to some customers at far-flung outposts were actually made by helicopter and by dog sled.

The Cooperator, Army Times Publications



such as this one were used by Panama Canal Commission employees and military families stationed in Panama. Panama Canal Commission

been using it for nearly a year. ("And for the Last Time!" Panama Canal Review, 4 Jan 1952)

JULY 1952

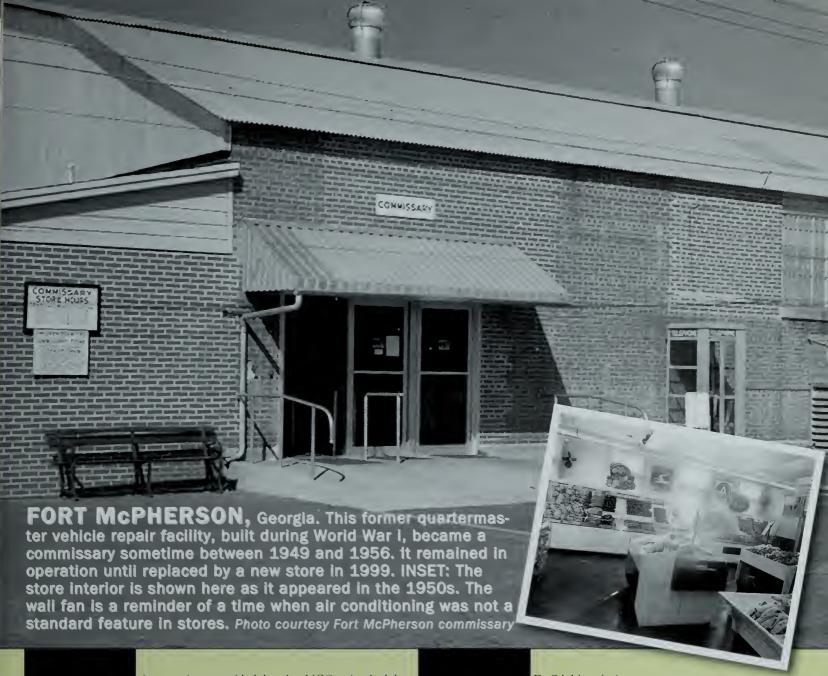
A NEW commissary sales store opened on the main post area of Fort Benning, Georgia. It was described as a "super commissary," covering 19,528 square feet, with a staff of fifty-nine people. It had ten cash registers, served ten thousand families, and had paved parking for two hundred automobiles. (The Cooperator, Oct 1952)

LATE 1952

SECRETARY of Defense Robert A. Lovett convened a special commission to consider the continued need for special and incentive pay, and to make recommendation as to the form such pay should take, if any. Named the Strauss Commission for its chairman, Lewis L. Strauss, the body looked favorably upon commissaries and noted, as had the Hook Commission, that commissaries had been taken into consideration when pay scales had been adopted. (Department of Defense, Differential Pays for the Armed Services of the United States, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1953. [Hereafter cited as the Strauss Commission Report. Also see Army Times, 29 Aug 1953)

NOVEMBER 1952 EIGHTY-FOUR CONUS stores were surveyed to determine compliance with the armed services commissary store regulation. (OQMG 6 Jan 1954, "List of all special studies ... pertaining to commissary stores since January 1, 1952...," p. 1)

DECEMBER 1952 A COMMISSARY at Camp Leheune, N.C. probably the Hadnot Point store—had a babysit-



ting service, provided by the NCO wives' club. (*The Cooperator*, Dec 1952)

1953

THE QUARTERMASTER Market Center System had responsibility for purchasing all perishables for the Army, Navy, and Air Force. *Quartermaster Review*, Nov-Dec 1958, p. 8)

THE REPORT of the Committee on Incentive, Hazardous Duty and Special Pay gave the controversy about the commissaries a new twist by observing that military personnel were organized to bargain with their employer, and therefore cautioned it was "necessary that the Congress exercise great forethought in changing unfavorably the terms of employment for service personnel." (Hearings, HASC, 8 May 1975, p. 243)

DURING 1953, the Army had sixty-nine stores in the United States and a total of 197 worldwide, with total sales of \$56,993,256. (*OQMG* unpublished Fact Sheets, dated 6 Jan 1954; on file with

DeCA historian)

MARCH 1953

THE SENATE Armed Services Committee referred to the secretary of defense a complaint that Washington-area commissaries were being operated contrary to existing law; the secretary replied that the stores were justified based upon the existing criteria. This exchange marked the start of a new round of complaints about and investigations into the commissaries. It was typical of the tactic of attacking Washington-area stores in particular—a tactic still used decades later. (OQMG, "List of all special and major studies," p. 2)

APRIL 1953

COMMISSARIES began obtaining most bulk meats, packaged fresh meats, canned bacon, ham, and produce from the following quartermaster market centers: Columbia, South Carolina; Denver, Colorado; Fort Worth, Texas; Los Angeles and San Francisco; New York City; Richmond, Virginia; and Seattle. There were also quartermaster field offices, from which field buyers operated, in Boston; Alexandria, Virginia; Orlando, Florida;

1953

1953

1953

1950s: PENSACOLA,

Florida. This store was opened during World War II. By the end of the decade, it would become the main store in a five-commissary complex that stretched from Whiting Field, Florida, to Meridian, Mississippi—a distance of 265 miles. It had a twenty-thousand-square-foot sales floor, with fourteen registers, and was open six days per week for a total of fifty-four hours. A drive-through annex, sold milk, bread, and eggs.

Military Market, Army Times Publications



APRIL 1953

MAY 1953

JUNE 1953

Kansas City, Kansas; San Diego; Mobile, Alabama; San Antonio and El Paso, Texas; Phoenix; and Tacoma, Washington. (*The Cooperator*, Apr 1953)

THE STORE at the Presidio of San Francisco served six thousand families from all over the Bay Area. Of these, two-thirds were active-duty military families. The store was entirely self-service. It had one officer, four enlisted men, and forty-six civilian employees. It was open six days a week, and military personnel in uniform had exclusive use of the store during the lunch hour—ninety minutes each business day. (*The Cooperator*, Apr 1953)

AN UNNAMED member of the staff of the House Appropriations Committee requested that the committee staff be allowed to examine the latest annual surveys on commissary stores. This began an examination of stores in urban areas, pricing, accounting, types of items sold, cost, use, classes of patrons, and justification of commissaries generally. This examination extended into July, and ultimately resulted in the restrictions on commissaries in the next appropriations act. (*OQMG* 6 Jan 1954, "List of Special Studies..." p. 1)

THE HOUSE Government Operations Subcommittee ("Harden Subcommittee"), headed by Cecil M. Harden (R-Indiana), opened hearings on competition of government-run industrial or business activities with private enterprise. Witnesses from the Government Accounting Office, an unnamed retail grocers' association, the National Supermarket Institute, and the Food Distributors of Greater Washington testified

against the existing commissary system. DoD witnesses would testify in its favor, citing morale and questioning the conclusions reached by a GAO survey. (*OQMG*, 6 Jan 1954, 'List of Special Studies,' p. 2)

Ultimately, the Harden Subcommittee and the House Appropriations Committee resisted civilian pressure to limit commissary operations, but the Senate Appropriations Committee succumbed. (*Army Times*, 15 Aug 1953)

JULY 1953

Store Operations: Empty, returnable soft drink bottles were causing a crisis because they were not being returned in adequate numbers to either the commissaries or the exchanges. As a result, the stores were losing money. The BX (base exchange) at Walker Air Force Base, New Mexico, for example, was losing \$500 monthly. The stores began planning a public relations campaign aimed at getting the bottles back to the stores, so the stores could return them and get reimbursed. (The Cooperator, Jul 1953)

JULY 1953

PEOPLE RUNNING commissaries were not entirely devoid of humor. **Capt. Rex S. Morgan**, the commissary officer at Camp Haugen commissary, Japan, had pushed sales by posting humorous, tongue-in-cheek signs, announcing the arrival of shipments of tomatoes and bananas. The shipments quickly sold out. (*The Cooperator*, Jul 1953)

JULY 9, 1953

THREE GAO representatives presented unfavorable testimony to the Harden Committee Subcommittee on the justification and need for commissaries in the three services. (*Events*, p. 10)

JULY 25, 1953

PROPOSED HOUSE Bill 5969, stating that commissaries within the United States were to be used only by members of the armed forces and their immediate families, prompted a proviso denying war widows use of the commissaries. Veterans and retirees were afraid they in turn would be denied privileges that had been promised them. In an attempt to reverse the restriction, a letter-writing campaign was immediately initiated, targeting, among others, First Lady Mamie Eisenhower. The Senate soon dropped the proviso. (The Cooperator, 25 Jul 1953)

AUGUST 1953

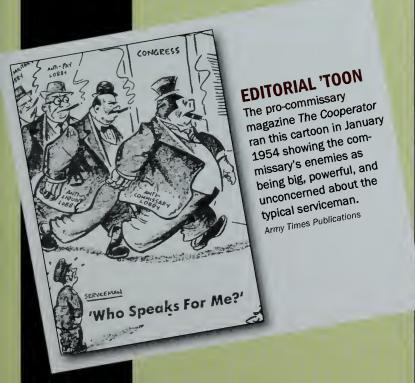
BUSINESS WEEK predicted "a number of the 208 Army, Navy, and Air Force commissaries in the continental U.S. will shut down soon." Prediction is a tricky business, however, and this did not occur. (Business Week, 22 Aug 1953, p. 62)

AUG. 1, 1953

THE DoD ANNUAL Appropriations Act for 1954 (P. L. 83-179) stipulated that no appropriations would be available to commissary stores within CONUS unless the secretary of defense certified that items procured from commissary stores were not otherwise available to DoD military and civilian employees at a reasonable distance and price, with foods in satisfactory quantities. (Comptroller General's Report, Apr 1964, pp. 12, 25)

AUG. 15, 1953

EDITORIALS RAN in Army Times, Air Force Times, Navy Times, The Cooperator, and civilian newspapers, announcing that the commissaries were "in danger" because of the latest moves to limit the number of



store locations. In response, thousands of people wrote to their congressional representatives, and numerous letters to the editors of pro-commissary magazines were printed, decrying the whole situation. (The Cooperator, August and mid-August issues, 1953)

AUG. 17, 1953

THE DEPARTMENT of Defense stated that anything exceeding a 20-percent markup on a "standard market basket" at commercial supermarkets near commissary locations was to be considered unreasonable. A "standard market basket" consisted of eighty-two to eighty-eight standard items and quantities that represented "the annual purchases of an average family, as computed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor." The Defense Department charged, "The ... recommendation [of using higher mark-up figures] would also constitute another instance of denying a long-established and accepted benefit, and another abrogation of a tacit contract on enlistment." [Emphasis added.] (Comptroller General's Report, Apr 1964, pp. 13-14)

SEPTEMBER 1953 SEVENTY-THREE CONUS Army stores were surveyed to obtain data as basis for certification. This resulted in the closure of three stores (two Army, one Navy). (OQMG, 6 Jan 1954, "List of All Major and Special Studies ... since January 1952," p. 2)

OCTOBER 1953

BY THIS MONTH, commissary backers had gone on the offensive against the movement initiated by the American Retail Federation to close down commissaries in the United States. (The Cooperator, Oct 1953, p. 5)

DECEMBER 1953

WHEN THE TOP position at Navy Ship's Store Office was redesignated, Capt. A. T. Magnell, officer in charge of NSSO since December 1951, became its commanding officer. (Navy Commissary Program)

DEC. 31, 1953

BY THIS DATE, Defense Secretary Charles F. Wilson was to certify that commissaries were needed to assure military personnel of adequate service at reasonable cost. He couldn't use any Defense funds to operate any domestic commissaries unless he could certify that for each store kept open, "undue hardship" would result to married personnel and their families if a particular store was closed. This was done in accordance with a rider to the appropriations bill. (HR 5968, Sec. 624; The Cooperator, Oct 1953, pp. 1, 6)

 Taken from comments made by Lin Swenningsen, spouse of a serviceman, on a panel addressing military commissaries



STORE INDIVIDUALITY AND 1954 - 1973 SYSTEM CENTRALIZATION

ITH THE END OF THE KOREAN WAR, the nation found itself in the midst of a Cold War and an ongoing Red Scare. There would be no military drawdown on the scale of the one that followed World War II. Many Americans remained in uniform; far more, in fact, than during any other peacetime period in the country's history. They were stationed in more places than anyone could have imagined before 1941.

As noted in earlier chapters, the family status of those in uniform was changing. Increasingly, enlisted military personnel (mostly male) had spouses and children. Whenever possible, their families accompanied them to their duty stations in the United States and overseas. That meant commissaries were needed more than ever.







A COMMISSARY GOES HOLLYWOOD. The 1968 film "Yours, Mine, and Ours" was about a widowed nurse who had married a naval officer who was a widower. From their prior marriages the couple had eighteen children, a premise that generated some humorous situations. The film addressed some very real problems confronting all American families, and particularly military families, in the late 1960s. The scene above is realistic for several reasons: It was filmed in an actual military commissary, the store at Naval Air Station Alameda, California; the film's stars, Henry Fonda and Lucille Ball, emulated hundreds of real military couples by wheeling four filled-to-the-brim carts through the store; and the movie made the point that without the savings the commissary provided, the family could not have made ends meet. Military Market, Army Times Publications

As long as commissaries and other facilities were functional and in a reasonable state of repair, the troops generally voiced few complaints. Their spouses, however, were far more discerning and vocal in their resentment of substandard housing, facilities, and services. After the Korean War the number of military spouses increased and complaints naturally became more frequent.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SPOUSAL OPINION

It was the spouses who made the commissaries more important. Single men and women in uniform ate in the mess halls and had little need to patronize resale activities on post. Married service members were busy people and were unlikely to have much time to visit the commissary or exchange. Shopping chores usually fell to the spouses, who took their time finding the best bargains. The resale stores tended to become social gathering places where

friends and neighbors ran into one another and engaged in conversation while they shopped. Naturally, among the many topics discussed would be how much they either enjoyed or disliked their resale facilities. These discussions were significant. A spouse's opinion on what would later be called "quality of life" considerations often meant the difference in choosing between re-enlistment or returning to civilian life.

The spouses found little consistency among commissaries from one installation to another, even within each branch of service. Despite the attention they were beginning to receive, commissaries were still being treated as afterthoughts in some locations. They remained in old buildings that had once been used for other purposes. Some stores were well maintained, but others were in a state of disrepair. Spouses found commissaries lacking when compared to stores in the civilian sector. Patrons who enjoyed a modernized store at one duty station were disappointed and

resentful when transferred to an installation where the facilities were substandard.

Some stores were not only obsolete, they were also unsafe. Several suffered heavy fire damage in the 1950s, usually from faulty electrical lines. One blaze destroyed the Navy commissary at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in June 1950. Stores at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, and Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, burned to the ground in 1951. Even a renovated store at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas, was damaged by fire in 1959.

But no matter what shape the stores were in, the families placed a high value upon their commissary benefit, and all feared the financial consequences if that privilege were to be taken away. In 1972, spouses participating in a special panel discussion on commissaries agreed that commissary stores were crucial in making up for shortfalls in military pay. They also unanimously agreed that they would not want to see commissary stores closed down



in return for some level of cash compensation. Lin Swenningsen, a mother of three and spouse to a sixteen-year serviceman, pulled no punches when talking about the commissary: "I for one am not willing to trust Congress and the Defense Department to adjust the pay, and even more important, to keep it adjusted in the future to make up for the loss of what to many, if not most of us, is our most important fringe benefit."

BY THE NUMBERS

From 1953-1974, there were more U.S. commissaries worldwide than at any other time. In June 1955, the services were operating 438 commissaries, 239 of which were

overseas. The total number of employees, worldwide, was 12,861, of which 5,851 were military. Sales had totaled \$306 million the previous fiscal year.

The Air Force operated the most commissaries within the United States (ninety-nine). Of those, thirteen were considered marginal, which meant their sales were so small the Air Force was considering closing them. These included Air Force bases such as Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama; McChord Air Force Base, Washington; Bolling Air Force Base, Washington, D.C.; Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland; and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. Considering how large and important these bases and their stores later became, it's difficult to imagine them as ever being "marginal."

Simultaneously, the Army operated almost as many stores in the Continental U.S. (88) and 6 more in Alaska and Hawaii, as well as the most overseas stores (128), with the greatest preponderance (58) in Germany. The Army had another 19 stores in France and 4 each in Panama and Puerto Rico. In Japan and Okinawa there were nearly 40 Army stores, with another 3 belonging to the Air Force and 4 to the Navy. The Army and Air Force stores in Japan had 444 servicemen working alongside 2,138 Japanese nationals.

The Air Force had fewer stores overseas than the Army, but seemed to have a few scattered just about everywhere. The Marine Corps had one commissary in Japan and all the rest were located in the United States. The Navy had thirty-three commissary stores and six branches in the States.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Army and Air Force operated the north-ernmost commissaries in the world. These stores, all in Alaska, were at Big Delta Post, Wildwood Station, Whittier, and Forts Greely, Richardson, and Wainwright, along with Eielson, Elmendorf, and Ladd Air Force Bases.

By 1963, the number of stores had increased to 477, with 284 in the United States and 193 in overseas locations. In the United States, 11,132 commissary personnel were comprised of 2,927 officers and enlisted working alongside 8,084 civilians. By 1966, there were 492 commissaries [this total counted branch stores separately] operating worldwide, 315 of them in the United States. Numerically, this was the commissaries' high-water mark. Within two years, commissary sales were nearly \$1.5 billion with \$100 million invested in inventories. There were nearly twenty thousand commissary employees worldwide.

'OH GIVE ME A HOME'

Each service considered its commissaries to be important, and each ran them differently. Organizationally, only the Navy had a modern, centralized system. The other services allowed individual bases to run their own stores with little or no guidance from any higher headquarters. The Marine Corps was especially proud that their stores were decentralized and locally run. What oversight there was came from Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. The Army Quartermaster Corps supported the Army's stores



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Blast from the Past: HOME DELIVERY and PHONE ORDERS

OME DELIVERY was once a standard service, something everyone expected from their grocer. Every grocer knew he would have to provide it, in some form or other, if he wanted to keep his customers. It was the accepted way of doing business. But times have changed. While it is still possible to find stores offering home delivery, the service is very rare.

Old commissary price lists and rules regarding delivery service provide some unexpected insights and reveal that in some ways, the good old days *really were* good old days. For example, many commissaries had some sort of delivery service, and most of these expected the customer to be home to receive the order. But at some posts, customers were not required to be at home as long as they left their doors unlocked. Delivery boys would bring the goods right into the kitchen, placing chill items directly into the icebox or refrigerator.

Such trusting, innocent days are gone. Few people today would dream of leaving doors unlocked to allow strangers into their home. It was a different world, and it's sobering to realize how radically things have changed in such a short period of time. Many people can still remember those days; it really wasn't all that long ago.

The earliest documented commissary delivery service was functioning in January 1919, at Naval Operating Base Hampton Roads, Virginia,

1938: THE DELIVERY BOYS from the commissary at West Point, New York, wait by their trucks.

Quartermaster Review

where home delivery was strictly an on-base activity. The store's policy stated, "No delivery of arti-

where home delivery was strictly an on-base activity. The store's policy stated, "No delivery of articles purchased from the Commissary Store will be made beyond the delivery limits established by the commandant." No goods would be shipped by freight or parcel post, either.

By the 1920s, there were dozens of commissaries participating in home delivery. At Fort Monroe, Virginia, in 1922, customers could place one order per day by telephone. Store personnel would prepare the order, and the customer could either pick it up in person or have it delivered to the home. There were standing daily orders for bread, and probably for dairy products as well; fresh meat and vegetables would be delivered only on the day ordered. Upon delivery, the customer or a family

member needed to inspect and sign for the order, unless the customer told the store he had waived this right.

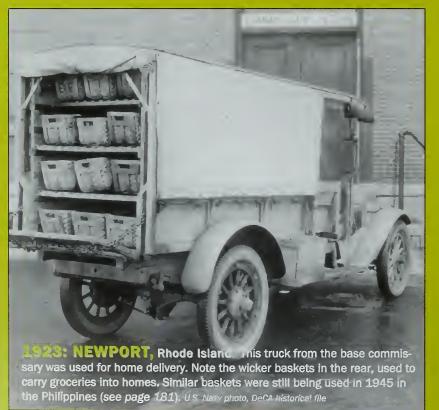
Deliveries were too costly and complicated if horses were involved; they had to be groomed and fed, hitched and shoed, and then there was the cost of a veterinarian. But the duty was easy when motorized vehicles were available. In 1923, the Naval Station at Newport, Rhode Island, used a motorized truck and old-fashioned wicker hand baskets. Fifteen years later, the commissary at West Point, New York, had a team of delivery boys driving a fleet of trucks, both on and off Military

Academy property.

Plenty of other places made deliveries. Since each had its own local twist, persons leaving one installation for another had to quickly learn the local rules. The 32nd Street Naval Station in San Diego took telephone orders and delivered to people living in San Diego or nearby Coronado for the charge of \$1 per month in 1927—a charge that dropped to 45 cents by 1935 due to the falling wages and prices of the Great Depression. Also in 1935, the store at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, refused to deliver any goods off the installation. On post though, it was willing to leave the order on the doorstep if no one was at home at the time of delivery. This policy was the antithesis of what went on four years later at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, where patrons were told that if they weren't home when the delivery arrived, their order would be taken back to the store.

At Fort Oglethorpe, no telephone orders were accepted, and all orders had to be placed in person by 8 a.m. At the same time, Langley Field in Virginia accepted phone orders but limited the deliveries to on-post and limited the number of items to thirteen, probably because (as Mary Murphy noted at Brooks Field [see chapter 6]) there were thirteen lines on the order blanks.

Fitzsimons General Hospital (later, Fitzsimons Army





Medical Center), Colorado, Fort Benning, Georgia, and Fort Sill, Oklahoma, all participated in home delivery. Each gave customers different rules to follow. Fort Sill was the most liberal, giving its customers until 10 a.m. each morning to place their orders and even accepting same-day orders on Saturday.

Following World War II, the service began to disappear. It persisted in varying forms at some locations, as at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, in 1963 (see above). Redstone's main commissary had two annexes: one was a tiny outlet located twelve miles from the main store; the other was this "mobile annex," which provided on-post customers front-door service. The truck operated five days a week and visited each housing area three times weekly. It sold high-demand items such as dairy products, and it may have also delivered special orders or standing weekly orders.

Home delivery was labor intensive, expensive for the store, and limited in scope. After 1945, as two-car families became more common and more civilian stores opened for business, demand for home delivery diminished. It gradually disappeared from the civilian sector, except at the neighborhood "Mom and Pop" stores. When it vanished from civilian stores, fewer commissary customers expected it. Then, as the military population grew and moved off the installations, the service simply became impractical and was almost universally discontinued.

Although dispersed patron bases and the additional costs for personnel and vehicles are still major obstacles, the arrival of the Internet has inspired speculation about reviving some form of home delivery by both the civilian and the military grocery communities. Some Internet-based grocery services have already come and gone in the civilian sector, but the possibility remains that some types of

Internet-based home delivery possibly carried out by contractors may yet become reality in both sectors. If that sounds unlikely, consider that all of history is the story of how things change. Historians are therefore inherently reluctant to say something will "never happen." We are more inclined to say, "Just wait and see." It still survives in a few places. At Misawa Air Base, Japan, some commissary baggers also work as contractors for the exchange, making on-base home deliveries of commissary and exchange purchases. Their fee is determined by the distance of a customer's home from the store and by the size of the order.



1971: SCHOFIELD BARRACKS, Hawaii. A mobile commissary (mobilecom) van driver from the commissary prepares for his route through U.S. Army Hawaii (USARHAW) residential areas. The van was designed to alleviate transportation problems for lower-ranking enlisted men's wives. The van stocked convenience items such as bread, hot dog and hamburger buns, prepackaged meats, and canned vegetables.

Military Market, Army Times Publications

antil 1962, when the Army Subsistence Center took control. The Army Troop apport Agency (TSA) started to get involved with commissaries in 1972. The Air Force's major commands loosely supervised the stores in each command and the Air Materiel Command (later known as the Air Force Logistics Command) had overall leadership responsibility.

Whether the stores were run by a centralized organization or by the local base, each was different. Few commissaries functioned in a structure that had been designed and built as a store. Instead, old, obsolete, or unused buildings were converted for use as sales stores. Each had its own personality, a unique floor plan, décor, equipment, parking lot, and storage facilities. Some were large, even supermarket-sized. Others were small, no-frills operations.

By 1973, most U.S. stores were still being operated in pre-existing structures. Army posts continued to use old stables and riding halls. Even the new store that opened in 1953 at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, had originally been a stable. But the Army had plenty of buildings available for commissary conversion other than those that had housed horses. Vint Hill Farms Communications Station, Virginia, converted a warehouse to commissary use in 1952, and it remained in that capacity for forty-five years. At Fort Knox, Kentucky, a laundry facility, originally built as a WPA project in the late 1930s, reopened as a commissary in 1951. In 1960, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, converted two, long, adjoining warehouses built in 1934 into one commissary structure with two long, slender aisles. It was generally regarded as the longest commissary on earth. To the customers, the aisles seemed never ending.

The Navy's Sand Point commissary, opened in 1968 at what was then called Naval Air Station Seattle, Washington, was built inside a large hangar that had housed seaplanes during World War II. This was one of the largest structures ever to house a commissary; the hangar was large enough to easily house the Navy exchange as well. Two other big hangars housed commissaries at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard



1960: NORFOLK. Prime parking at the Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, commissary was only for loading groceries. The store opened in 1918 as a co-op for naval personnel and their dependents. Originally it sold everything "from canned goods to gasoline," as *Military Market* described it. *Military Market*, *Army Times Publications*

and at Royal Air Force Base Edzell, Scotland. At Naval Air Station Miramar, California, an old storage facility was converted to commissary duty in 1959, while Naval Air Station Key West, Florida, placed its store in an old tobacco warehouse during the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1963, a new store opened in a former mess hall at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Arizona. At the Naval Training Center in San Diego, a commissary that had been placed inside a dormitory complex (including a mess hall and a library) during the 1920s underwent renovation and expansion in 1970.

Air Force stores on former Army air bases also used obsolete hangars, as well as old warehouses, for their commissaries. A store at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas, opened in 1960 in a small warehouse that had formerly belonged to the Army Quartermaster. Likewise, a big warehouse was converted to a commissary at Norton Air Force Base, California, in 1964. A year later, a twenty-four-hundred-square-foot section of the base's main cafeteria became a commissary at Arnold Air Force Station, Tennessee. In 1970, a store at Bolling Air Force Base in Washington, D.C., opened in old Hangar No. 2, built in 1939.

In 1951, a store opened at Ent Air Force Base, California, in what had been a "dilapidated and condemned old shed." *The Cooperator* called the commissary "ultramodern," with air conditioning, self-help



1956: FILLING THE CASE. A meat department worker stocks the case at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina.

Deca historical file, courtesy Cherry Point commissary

shelving and "visible merchandise" (which simply meant that the products were removed from their original box for display on the shelf). The usual practice had been to cut an opening in the box—so that customers could see the goods—and place it on the shelf. Perhaps the most bizarre conversion took place at Hamilton Air Force Base, California, where portions of a former morgue were pressed into commissary service.

NEW 'FACES' FOR OLD STORES

Before 1976, there was no uniform way of building a commissary. Many were still makeshift operations. The level of modernization and improvement depended upon how much money and attention the local



1963: EDWARDS Air Force Base, California. At this commissary the sign on the scale reads: "Patrons are reminded that it is their responsibility to see that the Bag Boys bag all their items." This sign would not be posted today. But some things never change. The sign on the cart reads, "Please return carts to shopping area," proving that then, as now, carts tended to wander off and needed shoppers to show them the way home. Military Market, Army Times Publications



1962: BAD KREUZNACH, Germany. By this year, the commissary was stocking household goods made by the blind. This is one of several ways in which stores have supported the civilian community while providing a military benefit.

Military Market, Army Times Publications

commander was willing to spend on them.

Not every commissary was in an old building designed for another purpose. A small number operating in the 1950s had been specifically built as sales stores. The commissary at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas, had been opened in 1942. Another, at Mountain Home Army Air Base (later, Air Force Base) in Idaho, had opened in 1943. These may have been the first stateside commissaries designed as sales stores since the days of the 1873 prototype.

The Corpus Christi store was revamped in 1956, adding floor space and an additional register. The fire that struck in July 1959 was confined to a small area, but it prompted another renovation, including lower ceilings, new lighting, and new wiring. Refurbished again in 1971-72 at a cost of \$1 million, the store received six new registers, along with 3,000 additional square feet of sales floor area and 10,000 more

square feet in its warehouse. The store remained in use until 1994.

The store at Mountain Home was probably the earliest commissary to have actually been built as a retail store on an Air Force base. It had been constructed as part of a three-building commissary complex built by the Army Air Forces in 1942. The complex included a subsistence storehouse

and a cold storage facility. It was destined to last three decades.

In 1945, a hurricane damaged Homestead Air Force Base, Florida, forcing its temporary closure. In 1953, when Homestead was reactivated, it quickly became obvious that its commissary was antiquated and inadequate. A new store opened in 1958, featuring modern registers with conveyor belts, fluorescent lighting, and plenty of cases for chilled and frozen products. This store was in turn replaced by a new structure in 1987.

Forty-eight years after the first hurricane, Homestead would be devastated by Hurricane Andrew. Among the many buildings heavily damaged by the storm was the new commissary (see pp. 400-01).

The base was deactivated and the commissary closed, but by 2006 some consideration was being given to bringing commissary operations back to Homestead, which had become an Air Reserve base.

Other new commissary sales stores that were specifically designed as such opened at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota, in 1956; Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, in 1957; and Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota, in 1958. The Marines opened two new commissaries in California at Camp Pendleton and Twentynine Palms in 1952 and 1956, respectively.

The Army's new stores included Fort Benning, Georgia, and Fort Devens, Massachusetts, both in 1950; and Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. As these stores opened, numerous others were revamped, refurbished, and repaired, stretching their incarnations as sales stores many years longer than would have been the case in the civilian sector.

AUTOMATIC CHECKOUTS, CONVEYOR BELTS, AND OTHER INNOVATIONS

By the mid 1950s, some commissaries began incorporating changes that would be considered commonplace two decades later. Improvements included such features as double doors for patron entry and exit to keep store temperature levels from fluctuating, improved lighting, new display techniques, and better stock rotation.

SAM ROBINSON: Commissary Meat Cutter, 1941-89

Robinson worked at the old Nand Surface Warfare Center Surface. Virginia, commissary and on whity store as a meat cutter from 1941 to 1989. In 1995, he wand some of his memories of those years

Retired for six years when I met him, he showed no signs of becoming—or even desiring to become—a couch potato. His forty-eight years of federal service apparently weren't enough for him, because at the time he was visiting the new Dablgren store a week before it opened. Full of memories and stories, able to quickly recall specific dates, he smiled as he told of nearly five decades of working in the old commissary, Building 112, which has since been torn down.—Author



SAM ROBINSON (right) with Tony Ventolo, standing beside the solid oak freezer door in the old Dahlgren store in 1995.

AM ROBINSON started working at what was called the Dahlgren Community Store on May 19, 1941. After being a meat room helper for about two years, he was given control of the meat department in 1944. "Things were different then," he said. "We cut everything with knives and hand saws. Everything—beef, lamb, and pork—had bones. Beef came in hinds and fores [hindquarters and forequarters]. Hinds were 150 pounds each. We used cleavers to divide up the pork chops. We didn't have band saws, only meat grinders and slicers. Everything else was done by hand."

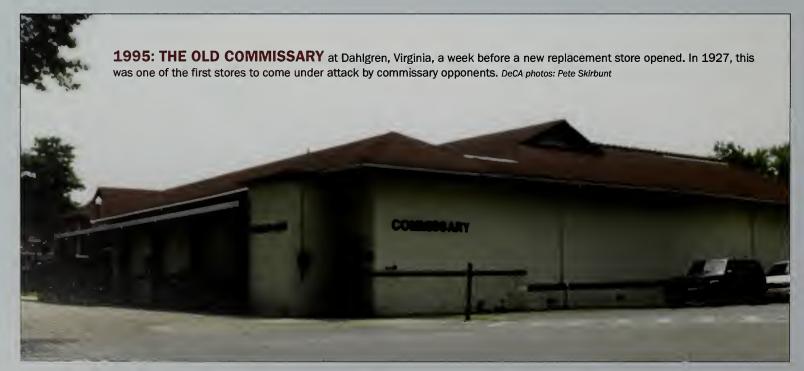
The old store was different in several ways from modern commissaries. Besides its small size, it had a soda fountain up front where the

entrance was in 1995. It sold sandwiches, drinks, beer, homemade ice cream, and all sorts of things. Storage was in the old bowling alley, down in the basement. In those days, a commissary officer was a uniformed military officer, but there were plenty of civilian employees. One of them, the home-delivery man, was named Zach Lewis. Robinson recalled that in those days, there were plenty of home deliveries, and Lewis kept busy. "He had a closed-in van in which to deliver groceries and made two delivery runs per day. People would phone in their orders and charge them to their accounts at the store.

"Civilians and military alike lived on base until later years, when all civilians had to move off. Only military live on base now. But civilians could use the store

until the 1960s, because this used to be a completely isolated area. That's why it was called, for many years, a community store rather than a commissary. There were no good roads at all. It's better now, but we're still pretty isolated."

Robinson retired from the Navy in 1959, but soon got bored and found a job back in the commissary, this time as a civilian, and remained at his job until 1989. "Halloween, to be exact: On October 31, 1989, I retired. But I still come back here to shop and see people I know. Besides, I couldn't wait to see the new store in operation. It's really great." — *Author*



Those who touted new technology as the wave of the future sometimes became overly enthusiastic. In 1955, Military Market somewhat prematurely announced that "closing commissary stores for inventory on the last day of the month will be a thing of the past one of these days." The reason for this optimism was a new accounting system, already in place at F. E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, and Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico. It used IBM computers and keypunch machines, shortening the inventory task by several hours and assuring far greater accuracy. Monthly inventories continued, but they were not as tedious as they had been.

In 1956, the new facility at Naval Base Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, had sixteen checkout lanes, three thousand line items, 450 parking spaces, and air conditioning—a rarity at the time. However, the real innovation was the method by which a customer paid the bill. Instead of paying at the checkout, customers had to take the cashier's tape to a central paying station. The customers must have found this system inefficient because they had to wait in line twice. This innovation never caught on, but similar ideas surfaced forty-five years later.

As they always had, commissaries slowly adopted the technology and amenities of the civilian supermarkets. By 1955, some commissaries were using the now-familiar cashier conveyor belt at checkout counters. Technological innovations did not guarantee that everything was perfect. Like all new technologies, there were hazards waiting to be discovered. At the time, Military Market noted, "The belts, which are operated by knee or foot pressure, save considerable wear and tear on cashiers." This was only a hint of the physical problems cashiers could experience, which would begin to come to the public's attention two decades later. These included foot and back problems from standing for hours at a time, carpal tunnel syndrome in the arm and elbow from repetitious movement, and headaches caused by eyestrain, poor posture, or the high-decibel whining of electronic cash registers.

By 1971, the Army's new store at Walter Reed Army Medical Center's Forest Glen



annex in Silver Spring, Maryland, was using closed-circuit television—the first time ever in an Army commissary.

UNPOPULAR POLICIES

The commissaries of 1954-1973 enforced several rules that have long since fallen into disfavor. Nowhere is this better illustrated than the vague restrictions on attire. The customer of the twenty-first century is still expected to dress with some modesty and decorum, which includes mandatory shirt and shoes, but the rules were once considerably less liberal.

In 1962, a sign posted in the Homestead Air Force Base store announced, "Female attire of customers is expected to be above reproach. Abbreviated shorts are not considered acceptable." Such a catchall pronouncement would be quickly challenged today. Singling out females, not to mention coming to a consensus on what was "above reproach" and "abbreviated," would today be a public relations nightmare.

Homestead's sign also announced, "All sales are final. No refunds or exchanges will be made after customer clears register." Modern

concepts of what patron service entails, including exchanging products with which the patron is displeased, make this "no returns" policy seem heavy-handed, unreasonable, and bad business.

At Fort Ritchie, Maryland, the commissary posted a gaggle of signs with more instructions than anyone could quickly comprehend. Most of it was common sense, but the constant reminders of regulations were not conducive to a pleasant, carefree shopping experience: Bag Boys work for Tips. Allotment checks not accepted. Checks may be written for amount of purchase only. Commissary store closed Wednesday for inventory. Please present ID card to cashier. Please have this merchandise weighed at scale.

One of the most widely disliked rules concerned one-way aisles, long traditional in the stores of every service. Originally instituted to cut down on aisle congestion in small stores with narrow aisles, the practice became unpopular as stores expanded, aisles widened, and product proliferation made it difficult for a customer to remember everything needed from one aisle before moving on. The one-way concept

mas popular among retirees and older customers, but it was later phased out. By 2004, only four stores retained one-way usles and arrows on the floor.

Restrictions on children under the age of ten entering the commissaries were at one time very common, especially at stores in the United States. The rules were enforced at the discretion of installation commanders. This policy was another practice favored by members of the old school who didn't want to worry about children running amuck, spilling product, breaking glass containers, tipping over carts, and the like. Of course, it was an extremely unpopular rule for young families. It certainly created difficulties for the children's parents, who needed to shop but couldn't always find or afford a babysitter.

The problem intensified as more service couples became service families. In the 1950s, some stores attempted to help parents with this situation. Some commissaries opened in-store nurseries to keep the children entertained and happy while their mothers shopped. Stores with nurseries included Augsburg, Germany; Fort Lewis, Washing-

ton; Hadnot Point at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Newport, Rhode Island; and Sagamihara, Japan.

Many stores had special registers to encourage uniformed personnel to shop at lunchtime, speeding them through the checkout line and getting them back to work. This practice has continued to the present day. So have the speed lines and express lines of the 1950s, which were (and are) handled differently by each store. Some stores limited the line to people with a certain number of items, usually a dozen or less. Other stores, such as the one at Corpus Christi, allowed patrons with six items or less to go to the head of the line, in front of people with more items. This practice didn't last too long in most locations, because patrons understandably disliked waiting while several customers zipped into line ahead of them.

BRANCH STORES, MILK BARS, AND DRIVE-INS

Some stores had annexes (also known as branches), dairy stops or milk bars, or driveup windows for additional services beyond

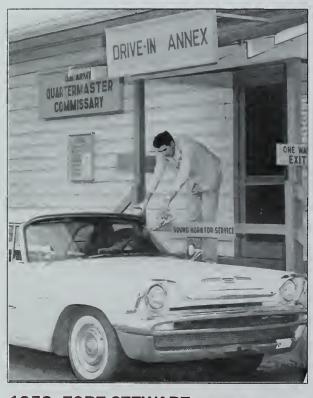
> what was normally provided by a typical grocery store. The branches' primary purpose was to divert a portion of the traffic from the most congested commissary stores. The concept was to upgrade an available building with a minimum of equipment and stock only popular, fast-moving items, such as bread, milk, ice cream, ground beef, and cigarettes. The idea caught on. By 1958, after a particularly popular success at a branch of the main Fort Bliss, Texas, commissary, the Army planned similar branches, which would stock about twenty items, for the Presidio of San Francisco, and Forts Lewis, Myer, Monmouth, Jackson, Benning, and Bragg. Fort Bragg would actually acquire four branches.

> Some posts needed larger branches with more line items. At Fort Knox, the humble commissary that had started out as a con-

verted laundry facility had two annexes of its own by 1963, both of which carried about 250 line items. The larger of the two served fifteen hundred customers per day, while the smaller one, because of its location near the center of the post, served three thousand. Years later, Forts Hood and Bragg took this entire concept to the next level when they each opened two full-sized stores.

When annexes primarily sold dairy products, they were often called *dairy stops* or *milk bars*. The latter designation was a traditional term for a small establishment where one could consume milkshakes, chocolate milk, and other dairy treats. However, the term was inaccurate when applied to a commissary milk bar, since nothing was consumed on the premises.

Convenient drive-in services, in which a customer never had to leave the car,



1958: FORT STEWART, Georgia—Drive-in Annex. Commissaries struggled to find a way to make their service more "drive-thru friendly" but it was difficult. The arrangement here was inconvenient for the employee, especially in bad weather. *Military Market, Army Times Publications*



became widespread in the 1950s. There were drive-in theaters, drive-in restaurants with curbside waitress service, and drive-in windows in fast-food establishments, liquor stores, and banks. Some commissaries attempted to follow this trend. Usually the drive-ins (or, more properly, the drive-throughs) were limited to hours when the store sales floor was closed, and made only a limited number of items available. In 1958 at Fort Stewart, Georgia, Lt. Earl W. Powis, the commissary officer, ran a drivein annex service that sold bread, milk, ice cream, eggs, soft drinks, and cigarettesstock similar to that of Vic Shuey's dairy stop at Norton Air Force Base, California. It consisted of a small annex in the side of the commissary building. Customers could park their cars and walk in, or they could pull up to a small covered porch and sound their horns for service. In the latter case, an employee would have to come outside and take the customer's order.

Other stores like Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, had none of the above services but did provide a covered drive-up entrance and exit that protected patrons, their groceries, and their vehicles from the elements. Few stores in either the military or the

civilian sector have such a feature today.

TYPICALLY, STORES OVERSEAS WERE ATYPICAL

By the 1960s, overseas stores were often housed in better facilities than those in the United States. Initially, many buildings were damaged by the war and were unsuited or unavailable for use, so commissaries were improvised from Quonset huts or similar pre-fabricated structures. As the postwar

1960: HOMESTEAD Air Force Base, Florida. This commissary had an express lane (they called it a speed line) and posted rules in the early 1960s. Some of the rules are interesting. Rule No. 4, "All sales are final," and Rule No. 9 regarding female attire would raise a few eyebrows in the twenty-first century. DeCA historical file, photos courtesy of Cal Mullins

situation stabilized, large, new buildings were constructed wherever there were enough customers to justify the effort. Sometimes the expense was borne by the host nation.

Commissaries overseas were placed in compounds or community centers far more often than was the case in the United States. This was done because of space limitations, cost considerations, and security requirements. Compounds or community

The Odyssey of **DONALD LONG**

the SAGA OF DONALD LONG is reministent of Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey.* Long didn't fight monsters, survive shipwrecks, or outwit enchantresses, but there were times when, like fabled Odysseus, his destiny seems to have been in the hands of a higher power.

Best known as the commissary officer of two of Fort Riley's old stores from 1960 to 1979 (see pages 72-73), Long believed he was the first civilian the Army ever hired to be a commissary store officer. In fact, he may have been the first civilian to fill that position for any of the services.

He was able to spend twenty years in one location because those were the days before the commissary career program prompted store officers to frequently move to new assignments.

It's not remarkable that he stayed in one location. What's astounding is that he was able to apply for the job at all. Becoming the first civilian commissary officer was the culmination of an arduous journey that seemed to turn entirely on blind luck and good timing.

If Homer could hear the story, he would surely say the Fates chose Long's path—and perhaps he would be right.

Long was born January 10, 1917, in Ordway, Colorado, and grew up in Lexington, Missouri. He graduated from high school in the middle of the Great Depression when there were no jobs to be had, so he joined the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). He was placed in a CCC camp somewhere in Missouri, and while he didn't say what they did at that camp—soil conservation and flood control, perhaps—he didn't do it for long, because fate soon stepped in. One night there was a brawl in the nearby town, and the camp's first sergeant and four cooks were all tossed in jail. The next day, Long's commanding officer asked if anyone knew how to cook. Long said he did, and unknowingly launched himself on a lifetime career of dealing with food.

After a few years in the CCC, he found work in a lumber camp in Lewistown, Idaho. "I could tell which way the wind was blowing, though. War was coming." So rather than wait to be drafted, he enlisted in the Army in October 1940, in Spokane, Washington, a full fourteen months before the bombs fell at Pearl Harbor. Initially assigned to the Fourth Infantry Division, he signed up for the Aircraft Warning Command. His duties would be "coast watching, forward observing, and radar." When the Fourth went to Alaska, he went to the Army Air Corps' March Field in California. Since he had CCC camp experience, he was placed in charge of a squad of twenty-four men who received basic training.

Soon fate stepped in again. Long's commanding officer at March, aware of his cooking background, placed him in charge of a big mess hall in Hangar 8. On his first day, "for twenty-four straight hours, I cooked pork chops, and left exhausted. But my star was on the rise." That's because it was at March Field that he got started working in commissaries. His day-long cooking stints soon ended as more cooks came in, so he volunteered for commissary duty, "just to have something to do." He gradually learned everything about running the store.



Photo courtesy of Tom Long

Upon graduating from Aircraft Warning School, he asked for an assignment in the Philippines. That seemed like a safe but exciting place to be; Pearl Harbor had not yet been attacked, and it appeared the main theater of war was going to be in Europe. He was actually on a ship en route to the islands when fate intervened once again; the ship developed engine trouble and had to turn back. If it had not been for that bad engine, Long would have been in the Philippines when the Japanese overran the islands less than a year later, and he would have been killed or captured. Even if he had survived, he would have been a prisoner of war for three years.

Instead, the faulty engine forced his return to California, where a lieutenant placed him in charge of feeding the men at twenty aircraft warning camps on the West Coast. He did such a fine job of training people to replace him that he was soon sent to Fort Benning, Georgia, for Officer Candidate School and emerged as a second lieutenant.

Eventually, he went to the Pacific as an infantry officer with ten thousand troops who spent most of the war on Peleliu in the Caroline Islands, carefully watching twenty-five thousand Japanese on nearby Eil Malk Island. Even then, fate protected him. He was in no real danger, because the Japanese had been cut off and were short on supplies. They were not likely to go anywhere.

Don laughingly told of the first enemy from Eil Malk to surrender. "As the war wound down, one Japanese guy wanted to give up, but he was afraid he'd be shot by his own men if they saw his uniform. So he stripped, and, holding his folded uniform above his head, walked at low tide on the reefs between the islands. I guess he walked all the way from Eil Malk to Peleliu (ten miles). He looked like a naked Saint Peter, holding his hands aloft to God, walking on the water. Within a few months, thousands of others followed him."



1947: THE COMMISSARY at Washington Heights, Japan, was one of the largest commissaries in the world when Donald Long became its commissary officer in the early **1950s.** DeCA historical file



1956: WASHINGTON HEIGHTS. Checking the condition of vegetables were, from left: Col. James T. Stewart, commander of the Tokyo Quartermaster Center; 1st Lt. A. T. Spratlin, 51st Supply Squadron, Okinawa; Col. Karl S. Thornburg, deputy commander; Capt. Donald Long, commissary officer. Photo courtesy Tom Long

He thought Fate again protected him—and millions of others, Japanese as well as American—when the atomic bomb was dropped and the war ended. "Had the A-Bomb not been dropped, I would have been one of the Americans invading the Japanese home islands. If that had happened, I would have been as good as dead. They were expecting a million American casualties, as well as millions of Japanese." Instead, he was able to return home and take the food service course at the Presidio of San Francisco.

Later, he went to Bad Toelz and Rosenheim, Germany, and worked in the commissary in support of the occupying forces. Promotion came quickly. He spent six months as a first lieutenant, and by the end of his tour in Germany, he was a captain. Next came a stint as the quarter-master at the Navajo Ordnance Depot in Arizona. When the Korean War started, he was sent to Korea, but he did not disembark there. The fates, or perhaps his résumé, had intervened again. Instead of fighting at Inchon or the Yalu River or the Chosin Reservoir, he left the ship in Yokohama, Japan, and was whisked to the Washington Heights Commissary near Tokyo. There, he became the commissary officer for what was then one of the largest Army commissaries in the world.

His later assignments were at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, and at Fort Ord, California. At Redstone, he served as club officer and assistant quartermaster and was promoted to major. At Fort Ord, he was the deputy post quartermaster, and he was in charge of the commissary. When he came up for retirement in 1960, he sent out 150 résumés; forty of them came back, telling him he was too old—because he was over thirty-five!

After leaving the military, he spent two months operating the mess hall at Soledad prison. Again fate took an interest, and soon he was able to apply to be the store officer at Fort Riley, Kansas, when Capt. Robert Gilroy, a West Pointer (and a former CSO himself), decided to civilianize the position. He interviewed and hired Long by telephone, sight unseen.

Fate even helped Long with real estate. When he arrived in Junction City, Kansas, looking for a home, he ran into a man who was practically giving his house away. Long was able to buy it for just \$300 down.

Long remained commissary officer until January 1979, when he suffered a heart attack at work. After staying in intensive care for two weeks, he decided the time had come to retire. He left the care of the store to Clayton Olson, who had been at the store since 1956. Olson then served as the commissary officer until 1995—giving him nearly forty years in the same store.

Long continued to call Junction City home throughout his retirement. He had lived there since arriving in 1960. He and his wife, Marjorie, had been together for fifty-four years when she passed away in 1995. They had met as teenagers in Missouri and had been married near March Field on April 12, 1941. Long passed away on April 13, 1998—the day after what would have been his fifty-sixth wedding anniversary. He left three children, six grandchildren, and five greatgrandchildren, who will, no doubt, pass down the story of his remarkable life.

Note: I met Don Long at the grand opening of the new commissary at Fort Riley, Kansas, in April 1997. Clayton Olson, the post's commissary officer from 1979-96, thought I should hear Don's story, and he made it a point to introduce us. It is due to Mr. Olson's foresight that Don's saga is now part of the historical record.

The grand opening took place on a sparkling spring morning. A gentle breeze came in off the prairie, softly ruffling the flags and stirring the manes of borses of the Fort Riley commanding general's mounted color guard. The whole world seemed fresh and renewed; it was an exceptional day for opening a new store. Still a young man at heart, Don was energized that morning. His memory was sharp, and his face lit up with enthusiasm while he told me his tale, which spanned eight decades (he had recently turned eighty).

It came very much as a surprise when I learned he had passed away less than a year later. I felt I had lost a friend, and I knew all of us in the commissary business had lost a wonderful colleague. I was glad I had heard his story before it was too late. The preceding is what he told me that morning. It is a privilege to include it in these pages. — Author



1965: HEIDELBERG. Germany. LEFT PHOTO: Meat market employee Erlka Hofheinz packages ground beef. RIGHT PHOTO: most of the members of the meat department. These professional meat cutters were in their heyday, cutting meat the old-fashioned way. There were no power saws; everything was accomplished by hand. It was not a job for the careless or the squeamish. DeCA historical file

centers were close to base housing and included the BX/PX, chapel, and other morale, welfare, and recreation facilities, such as gyms and bowling alleys. After World War II, this practice began at Nasugbu Beach, Japan, and Berlin, Germany. It worked so well that it became a common practice overseas, though no two stores were alike, and each store had its own personality. The standard store plan was still a thing of the future.

At all overseas locations, local nationals and American military spouses were hired in large numbers, but uniformed American personnel remained in charge of the stores.

SUPPORTING HOT SPOTS IN A COLD WAR

The 1950s and 1960s were the most precarious years of the Cold War. At the time, commissaries served people in uniform and their families all over the world, including some flashpoint locations that could easily have spawned crises igniting a third world war. By contributing to the health, welfare, and morale of the troops and their families, commissaries played a vitally important but largely overlooked role in winning the Cold War.

Cuba: The famous Navy and Marine Corps Base at Guantanamo Bay has

belonged to the United States since 1898. The base probably established a small commissary after the Navy authorized them in 1910. Certainly, it had one following World War II. When dependents began moving onto the base in December 1964 (just two years after the Cuban Missile Crisis), the commissary became more important than ever before. Known locally as "the Big Pantry," it supported several messes, clubs, and cafeterias, as well as embassies at Kingston, Jamaica, and Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Eventually, it became a Navy exchange operation.

As of 1966, Guantanamo had a staff of 27, three of whom were local Cubans. These employees, though living under Fidel Castro's rule, were permitted by both the Americans and the Castro regime to keep their commissary jobs. They made the daily commute to their jobs on foot through a gate in the fences and barbed wire. To this day, other local Cubans cross the fence to go to jobs at the base.

South Korea: Several stores were built after the Korean War ended in 1953. Among them was Naval Air Station Chinhae, which opened a store in 1961. The store was small and had only one cash register, but it was a godsend for men stationed in the area. This commissary stayed in business for forty-three years. A com-

missary also opened in 1961 at Pusan's Camp Hialeah.

In Seoul, South Korea's capital, an Army post known simply as Supply Point 41 opened Seoul's first sales commissary in 1961. Another Army post, at Taegu, which included Camp Walker, Camp Henry, and Supply Point 47, had a ration issue point and a bulk sales facility, and it opened a sales store in 1959. It would remain in service until a new store opened forty-one years later. Over at Hannam (an Army housing area later known as Hannam Village), a commissary opened by 1968.

Vietnam: During the long American combat involvement in Vietnam (1964-1973), there were only two commissaries. First the Army and then the Navy ran a combined commissary-exchange in Saigon, South Vietnam's capital. This store supported U.S. troops as early as September 1960. In 1965, the Navy replaced it with a new store at Saigon's Cholon Compound, which also had a branch store at Long Binh, an Army post, from 1965-1968. The Long Binh store officially became a separate facility in July 1968.

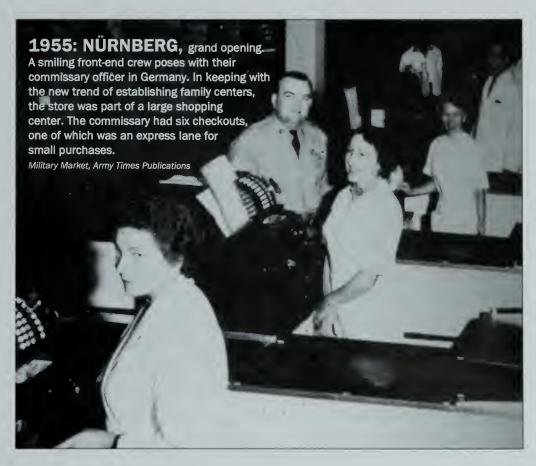
Germany: In contrast, West Germany was host to more than fifty commissaries. They were placed in buildings that varied tremendously in their size, state of repair, and original purpose.

The muraled commissary at Munich was not the only unconventional store. A commissary operating at Augsburg had a fish pond (complete with goldfish), with water running over moss-covered stones. It also had a nursery (unlike other overseas stores) since no one under the age of ten was permitted in the store. When a new store opened in 1955, the fish pond was left behind, but what the new store lacked in personality it compensated for in capacity. Its sales area exceeded eleven thousand square feet and it had eight checkouts.

The Army post at Garmisch had opened its commissary in 1949. Originally built in 1936, it had once been the headquarters building for the German Army's 1st Mountain Division. The Americans made it an Army headquarters of their own in 1945, but in 1949 it became a combined commissary, exchange, and theater. In 1965, the store was renovated, giving it two checkouts and a sales area of 4,068 square feet. In contrast, the commissary at Vogelweh in Kaiserslautern, which had opened by 1953, had 29,000 square feet, and multiple checkouts.

By 1953, several stores were open in West Berlin. They were unique because they were literally surrounded by Soviet garrisons in East Germany. The most prominent of these was at Andrews Barracks, the American headquarters area. A replacement store opened in 1958 at Truman Plaza, one of the first overseas community centers, directly across the street from the Andrews Barracks location. Contemporaries described this store as a "neat one-story building" and "a graceful addition to the center of the American community." Its large warehouse stocked enough items to last several weeks in an emergency. It had a spacious sales floor and had wide, two-way aisles to accommodate new, large shopping carts. In the front end, there were four sets of double doors, protected from rain, snow, and sun by a canopy. Truman Plaza would be modernized in the 1970s and 1980s, and ultimately included a commissary, exchange, bank, laundry, and various fast-food restaurants.

The Army had selected the Heidelberg commissary as a model store in 1947, but it



had trouble living up to that billing. A limited budget forced the discontinuation of popular services such as home delivery. Built inside a 1929-vintage railroad freight station, it was never really large enough to handle the customer load. In the 1950s, the store was forced to limit patrons to even-and-odd shopping days (based upon their shopping permit identification numbers) to alleviate overcrowding. But not everything went as planned.

SUPPORTING NATO

While the American presence, including commissaries, was greatest in West Germany, there were over a hundred American and NATO bases throughout Western Europe. Like their counterparts in West Germany, the commissaries at those bases played an important role in the overall plan to keep the Soviets at bay.

Spain: Here there were stores in or near Madrid and Seville, as well as on several installations. The store at Moron Air Base was in business from at least 1965 through 1976. Torrejon Air Base had a functioning commissary by 1958, and Zaragoza Air Base opened a store in 1960.

At Rota Naval Base, the commissary,

built in 1957, was destined to remain in use for many years. When it was forty-two years old, the store was enlarged and remodeled, and remains in use to this day.

Austria had an American presence for a few years following World War II until the U.S. and U.S.S.R. simultaneously moved their personnel out of the country. There were at least two commissaries in Austria as of 1954, located at Vienna and Salzburg.

Italy: As in the other former Axis nations, the American presence was more evident, and there were commissaries at eleven bases there in the 1950s and 1960s. Aviano Air Base had a commissary in the early 1950s that wasn't replaced until 2000. Camp Darby, in Livorno (Leghorn), to this day uses the same store it had in 1953. Down the west coast, not far from Mount Vesuvius, Naval Support Activity Naples had a commissary in the 1950s. A commissary-exchange complex that was the centerpiece of a community center opened in 1963, and would not be replaced until 2005.

Other bases in Italy with commissaries were Tombolo, Verona, Naval Air Station Sigonella (in Sicily), Opicana Garrison, and Trieste Garrison. The Vicenza

HEN NORTON Air Force Base, California, originally opened in 1941, it was known as

San Bernardino Air Force Base. Within seven years it had changed its name and had opened a commissary. The store was temporarily closed sometime between August 1949 and March 1950, as part of the agreement between the Philbin subcommittee and the armed forces to reduce the number of commissaries. It didn't stay closed too long, though. Largely due to popular demand, it was back in business by

In September 1960, commissary officer Vic Shuey opened a small annex, several blocks from the commissary, that sold milk and dairy

products, bread, and pastries. It reduced congestion in the main store, and, as an added customer service, it was open on days when the main store was closed. Such annexes were sometimes inaccurately called "milk bars," denoting a place where a patron could sit and order a glass of milk, a milkshake, or some ice cream. Shuey more accurately called



CUSTOMER Carolyn Strickland poses with Shuey at the "dairy stop" in 1960.



NORTON'S Vic Shuey (civilian holding the trophy) accepts the Air Force Logistics Command's "Best Commissary" award for 1964. Photos courtesy of Vic Shuey

his establishment a "dairy stop." Its location — in the same building as the base exchange — showed a level of friendly cooperation between the commissary and BX that was unusual at that time.

In 1964, despite a lack of funds, he was able to open a big new store. In 1988, he explained, "At that time we moved into an old warehouse that AFLC [Air Force Logistics Command] had previously used to store paint for airplanes. Maj. Gen. Clyde Mitchell was the depot commander, and he asked me, if he gave me this big warehouse, could I make a store out of it? I said yes! The base had no money, but in those days we could buy 'installed' equipment with surcharge funds and not have to get anyone's approval. As a result, I had procurement buy us a whole warehouse-full of 'installed' equipment, and we opened the store."

After the fact, the Air Force found out what Shuey had done. While they didn't officially disapprove, they thought it skirted the edges of what the surcharge was meant to do. Soon, the regulations were changed regarding the purchase of equipment with surcharge funds. "[In the future] we would have to get the approval of our major command, the old Air Force Services Office, and Air Force Headquarters. But at that point we didn't care, because we already had our store!"

Years later, Shuey recalled that Norton had "the latest state of the art in equipment, merchandising, vendor raffles, and so on. Very little of this type of thing had been done in commissaries up to that time." Thanks to his innovations, the Norton store won several awards, including Best Commissary in the Air Force Logistics Command, 1964; and Best Commissary, Military Airlift Command, 1966 and 1967. In recognition of his work, Shuey was given more responsibilities. Eventually he became director of the Air Force Commissary Service's (AFCOMS) California Region. He retired in 1988.

Norton's store remained in the old warehouse from 1964 until February 1987, when AFCOMS opened a new store at the base. It had a memorable architectural feature that gave it a futuristic look—almost like an interplanetary spaceship. Locals simply called it "the thing." Unfortunately, this new store, along with the rest of the base, fell victim to base realignment and closure in January 1994.

(Caserne Ederle) store, built in 1957-58, would not be replaced until 1999. Brindisi Air Station at San Vito De Normanni Air Base opened a newly built store in 1965 that served its customers for twenty-nine years before closing in 1994.

Greece: Besides the downtown store established in Athens in the late 1940s (see Chapter 7), by 1960 there was a commissary at Hellenikon Air Station. This facility was adjacent to Athens airport. By 1960, there was also a store on Crete at Iraklion Air Station that would remain in business until 1994.

The Atlantic and Northern Europe:

In Greenland, air bases at Narsarssuak, Sonderstrom, and Thule all had sales commissaries in the late 1950s. Lajes Field on Terciera Island in the Azores continued the store operations that had started in the late 1940s. In Iceland, the Army may have had a commissary in 1942; the first confirmed store run by the Air Force opened near Keflavik in 1951. A new store built by the Navy in 1972 was still operating three decades later.

By 1960, the Air Force had one store in Oslo, Norway, and one at Camp New Amsterdam (later called Soesterberg Air Base) near Utrecht in the Netherlands. A new store replaced the latter in 1984, and Oslo's commissary moved into rented space in 1986. Both stores closed in 1994, a few years after the end of the Cold War.

In the United Kingdom, there were at least thirty-one commissaries in the 1950s

and 1960s. Most of the stores had their beginnings during World War II, at the bases supporting the U.S. 8th Air Force. Because they were run by the individual bases, documentation of the stores' early years is scarce. Years later, some of these stores were of very high quality. The store at RAF High Wycombe Air Station, for instance, was honored in 1963 as "Best Commissary Overseas" by the Air Force's commissary office (then located at Middletown Air Materiel Area, Pennsylvania).

World War II-era stores at RAF South Ruislip and RAF Welford stayed open until 1968, RAF Sculthorpe's lasted until 1992, and RAF Upper Heyford's, built in 1947, did not close its doors until 1994. There were several commissaries in the London area, including Navy stores at West Malling and West Ruislip that were combined commissaries and exchanges, and they were eventually absorbed by the Navy exchanges.

In 1960, RAF Bentwaters opened a commissary that stayed in business until a new facility opened in 1980. The first small commissary at RAF Chicksands (also known as Chicksands Priory), replaced in 1969, stayed in use until 1995.

In Scotland, RAF Prestwick opened a store in 1952. It closed in 1965, as did the commissary at RAF Kirknewton Station. RAF Edzell (called Naval Security Group Activity Edzell by the Americans) opened a store in 1964, and two years later it moved into an aircraft hangar. There it remained

until the Americans moved out in 1997.

Other early commissary facilities in the UK were located at Royal Air Force bases Alconbury, Brise (Brize) Norton, Bruntingthorpe, Burtonwood, Cranage, Croughton, East Kirkby, Elvington, Fairford, Greenham Common, Harrogate, Lakenheath, Manston, Mepal, Molesworth, Shepherds Grove, Sturgate, West Drayton, and Wethersfield, as well as Burderop Park Military Hospital and Wimpole Park Hospital.

FORGOTTEN STORES IN FRANCE

Across the English Channel, there were several dozen U.S. military commissaries at bases in France. Although the bases were important to NATO and U.S. policy in the early years of the Cold War, few Americans remember them today. The bases eventually closed because French President Charles de Gaulle wished to restore his nation's initiative and independence in foreign affairs. In 1959 he closed all U.S. bomber bases in France and removed the French Mediterranean Fleet from NATO command. Even so, twenty-six U.S. bases remained in France, along with their commissaries, for seven more years. Then de Gaulle, who believed the only way to restore his nation's prestige and reassert its sovereignty was by ending its dependence upon foreign troops, withdrew all French forces from NATO in 1966. The next year, all U.S. forces left France. These events marked the beginning of a strained Franco-American relationship that has last-



ed almost four decades.

Bases in France that had American commissaries in the late 1940s or early 1950s included Capitteau, Chateauroux Air Depot, Chinon U.S. Army Depot Activity, Fontainbleu, Ingrandes, LaRochelle, Nancy (U.S. Army Depot Complex Eastern France), Orleans (including Coligny Caserne and Harbord Barracks), Periguex, Poitiers (U.S. Army Depot Complex, Eastern France), Rochefort, Trois Fontaines, and Verdun. Some had opened in the late 1950s, including Chaumont Air Base, Etain/Rouvers Air Base, Everaux, Laon Air Base, Nice, Phalsbourg, Sainte Nazaire, Sanmur, Toul-Rosiere Air Base, and Vitry le Francois. All of these stores were closed by the end of 1967.

Few official details are left concerning the commissaries at these bases, though individual memories provide some insight. In 2000, Cary Shelton of Hopewell, Virginia, a former bag boy in the Verdun store, recalled the store was located in the housing area, was fairly large, and had about eight registers. Beyond that, his memories were sketchy; he only specifically remembered, "I was sixteen or seventeen at the time, and I got good tips!"

The largest of the stores was located at Bel Manoir in Paris. It may have been in operation as early as 1945. By 1960 it was large enough to have a branch store, located at Camp des Loges. The second-largest commissary in France was at Chateauroux Air Depot (known locally by the Americans as *Chad*), which served an average of five hundred patrons per day with a staff of 10 military, 6 American civilians, and 35 French civilians. It also had a branch at Cite de Tourvent, which opened by 1957 and operated as a dairy store with a limited number of products.

ASIA MINOR AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Turkey: Three American commissaries were operating in Turkey by 1965. These stores, at Cigli Air Base, Istanbul, and Karamursel Air Base, were run by TUS-LOG (U.S. Logistics Group, Turkey) detachments. When Karamursel was inactivated in 1978, it was replaced by an Air



1957: CHATEAUROUX. In this, one of the largest commissaries in France, the store staff included 10 military, 6 U.S. civilian, and 35 French employees. This commissary installed electrical cash registers and checkout stands in 1956. (See page 36 for a photo of the store's exterior). Military Market, Army Times Publications

Commissaries in France, 1960s

HE UNITED STATES HAD commissaries scattered throughout France after World War II. President Charles de Gaulle closed U. S. bomber bases and removed the French Mediterranean fleet from NATO command in 1959, but twenty-six American commissaries remained active in France until 1967, when all U.S forces were told to leave the country.

Although few Americans today recall these commissaries, the accompanying photographs reveal they were as large and well-stocked as any in Europe or Japan. The French commissaries were inspired, at least in part, by the local cuisine. The large selection of goods made customers pause and consider which of the many products they wanted. This was a quandary that had seldom been faced by commissary patrons just ten years earlier, even at stores in the United States.

While most of the groceries on the shelves were American products, most produce items came from Europe, and fresh beef came from Northern Ireland. A dairy at LeMans that was financed by the Marshall Plan furnished fresh milk.

In several port cities in southern France, there were communities of American Navy families, but there were no traditional commissaries. To those towns, the USS *Northampton* brought its shipboard commissary. (see page 238)

Force Station at Izmir. There was also a store at Incirlik Air Base near Adana that would play a significant role in future U.S. operations in the Middle East.

The most intriguing Turkish location was at Ankara Air Station. Run by TUS-LOG Detachment 30, it was in an old building, co-located with the exchange, inside a 140-acre walled and fenced compound in the Kizilay district of downtown Ankara. In 1966, a new store opened in a better building, which may have been built specifically as a commissary. It was unusual in that its aisles were set diagonally to,

rather than parallel with, the structure's walls. Taken over by the Air Force Commissary Service (AFCOMS) in 1976, it remained in business until 1994, when downsizing would prompt its closure. Then, changing political conditions resulted in a larger military presence in Ankara, so a new store, built inside an old cold-storage facility, would open in August 2000.

In **Pakistan**, a lone commissary at Peshawar Air Station opened in 1965 but remained only through 1968. On the other hand, in **Saudi Arabia**, there were two stores established at bases that would





1963: LAON AIR BASE.

LEFT: a customer compares prices in a grocery section that was the equal of all but the largest commissaries in the United States. ABOVE: Customers in the dairy section. Photos: DeCA historical file



1963: BEL MANOIR. This store was located in a shopping center a few miles from downtown Paris. At the time, the store was run by the European Exchange System, which combined the commissary with the exchange. The store included a snack bar and delicatessen. Military Market, Army Times Publications

remain active for decades to come. They were Riyadh, an Army post, where the first commissary opened in 1966, and Dhahran, which had an Air Force store in 1960 that was later transferred to the Army.

COMMISSARIES IN AFRICA

In Africa, there were Army commissaries operating at Asmana and Mossau, Eritrea, in 1954, and at Kagnew Station, Ethiopia, in 1965. In Algeria, Wheelus Air Force Base had a commissary by 1958, but Americans were gone by the end of 1968. In neighboring Morocco, several air bases

had commissaries. Although French Morocco and Spanish Morocco had both become independent, and were united in 1956, the Moroccans still had close ties with France, and the Americans felt some pressure to leave. Stores at Benguerir, Nouasseur, Rabat/Sale, and Sidi Slimane Air Bases all opened before 1960, only to close in 1967.

The commissary at Kenitra (known also as Port Lyautey), in operation as early as 1942, had probably been established during World War II as a makeshift operation, combining commissary and PX. It survived to serve the base for another three decades, closing around 1978.

THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Hawaii: Probably the most exotic commissary location of all, both in terms of location and the store itself, was the Navy's new store at Pearl Harbor, which opened in 1956. It replaced a makeshift store in a medical warehouse building that had, in turn, taken the place of a store destroyed by fire in 1950. For a time the 1956 store was regarded as "the showcase of the Navy resale program." The store remained in use until a magnificent community center, housing both the commissary and the exchange, opened in October 2002.

The Navy had other commissaries in the islands, including one at Naval Air Station Ford Island and another at Barber's Point. The former closed in 1972, but the latter had a store that operated from 1944 into the twenty-first century. That store consisted of three connected Quonset huts built in 1942. The store remained essentially unchanged until 1967, when it underwent extensive renovations. One of the Quonset huts was leveled in the process, but the others remained as part of the store's internal structure.

Hawaii's Fort Shafter had originally been established in July 1899 as Kahauiki Military Reservation; nearby, Schofield Barracks was established in 1908. Both posts had commissaries by 1934. Fort Shafter conducted commissary operations until June 2002. Schofield Barracks built a new store in 1955 that was ultimately replaced by a new facility in 1997. Hickam Air Force Base, which originated as the flying field for old Fort Kamehameha, had a store by 1934, opened a new one in 1949, and opened yet another new store in 1975. After undergoing renovation in 1986, this last store would remain in business into the next century.

The Marine Corps Air Station at Kaneohe Bay converted a former mess hall to a commissary sometime after 1942. It was a sign of the times that in 1956, of the store's eighty shopping carts, thirty had child seats. The Baby Boom had arrived in the Marine Corps.

1955: CAMP KOBE.

Customers wait for service at the meat counter. The Camp Kobe, Japan, commissary served 540 families in the area and doubled as a ration issue point and a bulk sales facility. In 1955, residents at Miho Air Base were ordering their groceries from the Kobe store, which shipped the individual orders by train.

Military Market, Army Times Publications



ON THE ROAD TO MANDALAY: EAST ASIA

Japan: When Japan's commissary trains stopped running in the early 1950s, there were many fixed-location stores distributed throughout the Japanese home islands. More than fifty stores operated in Japan between 1954 and 1973. Most were in new structures, built expressly as commissaries. The Japanese government paid for several of them in accordance with the peace treaty, by which the Japanese military was reduced to a homeland defense force while the United States provided Japan's military security. Japan would still be paying for new stores decades later; some were sensational new facilities, beyond anyone's wildest imagination in the 1950s.

In the meantime, the services did very well for themselves. The Army had opened the first of its community center compounds in Japan at Nasugbu Beach in 1948; By December 1956, it was also the location of a sales store but also of a ration issue point and bulk sales store.

Two of the first postwar commissaries to be designed from the outset as retail food stores were those at Tachikawa Air Base and Washington Heights, both of which had opened commissaries in 1947. Both stores were self-service operations except for the meat and bakery counters. Washington Heights, first an Army housing area and later an Air Force base, was a large sales store with no troop support or subsistence items. In September 1955, the

store's workforce was 109 military, 5 civilians, and 119 Japanese civilians.

With the closure of Tachikawa Air Base in 1977, the biggest Air Force store in Japan was located at Misawa Air Base. Opened in the 1950s, the commissary was replaced in 1985.

Nasugbu Beach was only one of several commissary locations in the Yokohama area. For a while, the area was collectively known as Camp Yokohama and included several housing areas. The Army's Yokohama commissary was in business by May 1958. A store at Naval Housing Area (NHA) Yokohama, active by 1953, continued doing business until 1969.

In 1949, the Army's Camp Kobe was a supply depot for commissary trains run-

ning to Yamaguchi, Miho, Matsue, Kure, Tottori, and Okayama. It had its own sales store by 1953, and it remained in business for several years, along with a ration issue point and a bulk sales facility. In October 1955, the customers at Miho Air Base were mailing their orders to the store at Kobe. The staff there sent the filled orders back on a weekly train.

In 1966, Yokota Air Base's postwar commissary was remodeled and upgraded. Seven years later a new store opened, funded by the Japanese government and known locally as *The Komstore*. It was built inside a large aircraft hangar, allowing it to be far more spacious than most stores. Including storage and administrative areas, it covered 20,300



1965: YOKOSUKA, Japan. Military staff members of the commissary pose in front of the store directory. To lessen the impact of a three-month shipping cycle from the states, this store, working in tandem with the Navy Exchange, operated a fifteen-thousand-bird "chicken ranch," procured local vegetables, and operated its own bakery. These men are identified only by their last names. Top row, from left: Tucker, Badalich, Chief Madon, Lt. Worth (probably the commissary officer), Chief Chang, LeMieux and Dunham. Bottom row: Celi, Davis, Brown, Odom, Pereira, and Rust. Military Market, Army Times Publications

Gitmo's

OCATED 480 AIR MILES south of Miami is a 17.4-mile strip of land on the Cuban coast that has been home to U.S. Naval forces and Marines since 1903. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, popularly known as "Gitmo," has the distinction of being the oldest continuously operating U.S. base operating outside the United States, as well as the only American base in a communist country. A commissary has been operating there at least since 1960, and probably far earlier.

Relations between Cuba and the United States deteriorated in the late 1950s with the rise of Fidel Castro and the eventual communist takeover of the island. In October 1962, military family members and government employees based at Guantanamo were evacuated when President John F. Kennedy disclosed the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba. During the resultant Cuban Missile Crisis, the island was ringed by a U.S. naval quarantine until the Soviets removed the missiles.

When family members and other evacuees began returning in December 1962, the commissary gained importance. Its patrons lived in a precarious location, so the store helped maintain their quality of life and their collective morale.

By 1966, the facility was known by some as "the Big Pantry" and supported several messes, clubs, and cafeterias, as well as embassies at Kingston, Jamaica, and Port-au-Prince, Haiti. There was at the time a staff of twenty-six—three of whom were Cubans who commuted to their jobs on base.

In 1991, the Navy commissary became a NEXMART run by the Navy Exchange Support Command (NEXCOM). The groceries were (and still are) supplied by DeCA, but the personnel who run the store are all NEXCOM employees. They are paid both by DeCA and NEX-



THE "BIG PANTRY" as it appeared in 1973. U.S. Navy photo, DeCA historical file

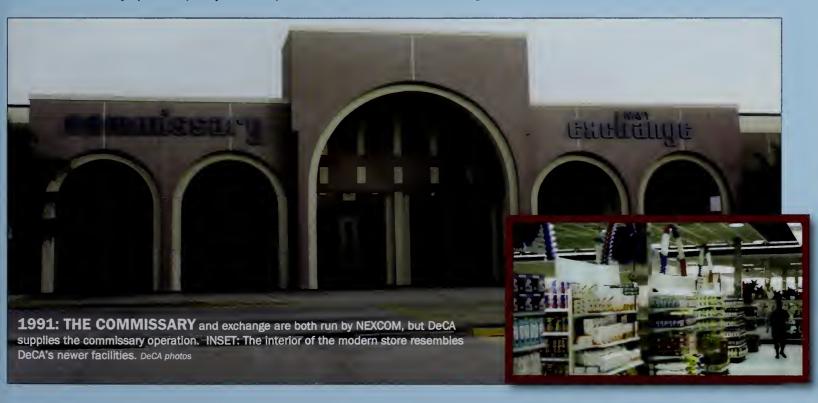


1966: SHOPPERS peruse canned goods and the meat department. *Military Market, Army Times Publications*

COM on a pro-rated scale according to how much of their job is commissary-related.

The primary mission of Guantanamo Bay is to serve as a strategic logistics base for the Navy's Atlantic Fleet and to support counter-drug operations in the Caribbean. After the September 11, 2001 attack on America, Guantanamo Bay added a new mission as a detainee center for suspected terrorists.

— Some information for this story was taken from the U.S. Naval Base Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Web site.



square feet, had eleven checkouts, and carried 3,280 line items. Later, it added a deli, fish market, and bakery. The 1973 store remained in service until the Japanese government funded a spectacular new, modern commissary inside a multi-story community center in October 2001.

For a while the store at Camp Zama, near Tokyo, served the Sagamihara Dependent Housing Area. The building had original-

ly been constructed in 1935 as a cavalry stable for the Imperial Japanese Army Military Academy. Converted to a commissary in 1952, it continued in that capacity for fifty years. The area had another store by 1953, as well as a ration issue point and bulk sales store.



1958: YOKOHAMA, Japan. The Army's Nasugbu Beach housing area commissary in Japan became known simply as the Yokohama store in the early 1950s. It is shown here in 1958. U.S. Army Quartermaster Museum

Grant Heights, a housing area that initially belonged to the Army and later to the Air Force, activated its commissary in 1949. It was the perfect neighborhood store. *The Quartermaster Review* described it this way:

"[It was] designed and constructed from the ground up to fit into and become

an integral part of a large family housing unit. Convenience for the customer is a paramount consideration here. All activities are on one level; the interior is airy and light; there is no crowding, the flow of traffic throughout being logical and easily controlled; everything is displayed conveniently within reach; and, most important, the housewife, upon leaving the cashier, is within a few short blocks of her own home."

Yokosuka's first store opened prior to November 1955. In 1967, the base opened a commissary annex at Nagai Heights. By February 1960, another store was operating nearby in Naval Housing Area (NHA) Yokosuka. Both stores carried frozen foods from the United States and



1955: ANDERSEN Air Force Base, Guam. The Andersen store replaced the old "Marbo" commissary. At the time, the Andersen store was one of the finest commissaries in the world. Military Market, Army Times Publications

CHAPTER 8

local fresh vegetables. The NHA store had its own bakery, which produced doughnuts, rolls, cupcakes, and other pastries. Since food orders that went through Oakland took three months to arrive, the local Navy exchange helped supply the commissary with fresh chickens and eggs from a fifteen-thousandbird chicken ranch it operated.

At nearby Camp McGill, an Army store operated in collaboration with the Navy Yokosuka commissary in 1953. The Navy assumed full control of it by October 1955. Camp Sendai/Camp Haugen had been a supply depot for commissary trains running to Fukushima, Aomori, Morioka, Akita, and Niigata in 1949, and it had a resale store.

Other early stores in Japan included the downtown Tokyo store (described in Chapter 7), Osaka, Negishi Heights, Nagoya, and Camp Hakata, near Fukoka. By the early 1950s, stores operated at Camps Crawford, Drew, Fuji, Jono Kokura, Jimmachi (also known as Camp Yung Hans), Matsushima, Mawer, Nara, and Whittington. Bases in Japan opening a commissary in the late 1950s or the early 1960s included Marine Corps Air Station Iwakune, Ashiya Air Base, Kisarazu Air Base, Itazuke Air Base, and Kanoaka Barracks.

Stores that had operated since the 1940s but were closed by December 1956 included Nijimura, Camps Kokura, Otsu, Chickamauga (in Beppu), Haugen and Schimmelpfennig (both near Sendai), and Camp Wood (in Kumamoto). Most had been home to a sales store, a ration issue point, and a bulk sales facility.

The Camp Drake commissary in Asaka was the supply point for commissary trains running to Mito, Utsunomiya, Kofu, Nagano, and Karuizawa. By December 1956, the Camp Drake facility was a ration issue and bulk sales point but no longer a sales store.

Naval Base Sasebo (Fleet Activity Sasebo) was the rail supply source for the Nagasaki and Saga commissaries. An active sales store opened at Sasebo by September 1960. Kyoto, meanwhile, had been the supply depot for commissary trains running to



1968: CLARK Air Force Base, the Philippines. Employees stock bread and dairy products in one of the three big Quonset huts that comprised the commissary. Bread was shipped to the Philippines from the States, but eggs were obtained locally. Military Market, Army Times Publications

Fukui, Kanazawa, Toyama, and Maizuru. Its sales store was active by 1953, as was the store at Sagami Depot.

From 1946 to 1978, every commissary on Okinawa received its stock from the Army depot on the island. The biggest installation on Okinawa was at Kadena Air Base, which was operating its store by 1946. In 1981, the old store would be replaced with a new one, financed by the Japanese government. On the southern end of the island, Naha Air Base opened a commissary by 1965 that eventually became a branch of the Kadena store. It would close in 1979 after the Air Force presence at Naha dwindled.

At Makiminato Air Station, the Army ran the commissary from 1946 until 1977, and the Air Force operated it until 1987. It closed that year when the housing area was returned to the Japanese government.

Known today as Camp Butler, the installation at Sukiran (also spelled Zukeran) was occupied throughout the 1950s and 1960s by the Army, and later by the Marines. Its first commissary opened around 1954, and by 1956 it had a ration issue facility and a bulk sales facility. AFCOMS began operating a sales store for the Marines in 1977.

THE PHILIPPINES

The United States had controlled the Philippine Islands from 1898 to 1946 and would maintain bases there until 1991, when negotiations to renew the installations' leases failed.

Clark Air Base, an Army airfield and later an Air Force base, had been the airfield for old Fort Stotsenberg, which had been established in 1902. Clark operated a commissary by 1934, if not before. The store in April 1955 consisted of several large, interconnected Quonset huts. It made local purchases in northern Luzon for lettuce, tomatoes, bananas, and radishes. This arrangement didn't change until 1984.

During the 1950s and 1960s Clark needed four warehouses. It had five cash registers, one of which was a rush line for customers with ten items or less. Three workers (a price caller, a cashier, and a carry-all boy) were stationed at each register.

The big naval base at Subic Bay had a

SHIP AHOY: A Commissary Goes to Sea

USS Northampton Brings Groceries to Families Stationed in Med

UST AS THE ARMY had employed trains to bring commissaries to service families in Japan, in 1954-55 the Navy used a ship to bring a "dependent's store" to families stationed near various ports on the Mediterranean coast.

The ship was the cruiser USS

Northampton (CC 1),* flagship of the
U.S. Navy's Sixth Fleet. Sixth Fleet
families stationed in Europe had a difficult
time getting the items they needed on the local
economy. So the Navy gave the ship special
authority to convert one of its bunkrooms
into a retail store that would stock items not
normally carried by a ship's store afloat.

The store's only customers were the families who came aboard the ship at various ports of call. Described at the time as "a floating super market," it was different from the traditional ship's store afloat in that it was meant for families stationed ashore, not for men aboard the ship; *Northampton's* crew could not shop there while the ship was underway.

Although the *Northampton's* dependents' store sold some exchange items, it was considered a commissary because the bulk of its stock was foodstuffs. Accordingly, the store collected a surcharge. It sold canned and bottled goods, meats, poultry, fresh fruit, soup,



The Navy had come full circle from the days of the bumboats. Once dependent upon local merchants to supply its ships with non-ration foodstuffs, the Navy now brought food for sale to various foreign ports to support American families stationed nearby.

coffee, tea, evaporated milk, popcorn, syrup, cake mixes, paper goods, detergent, and other household items, as well as toys, clothing, watches, and cosmetics.

Among the ports the *Northampton* visited were Villefranche, Cannes, Golfe Juan, and



CUSTOMERS LEAVE the *Northampton* with their commissary purchases packed in boxes provided by the store.

Photos: Military Market, Army Times Publications

Cape Ferrat. Customers came aboard the ship and did a month's worth of shopping, since the flagship's visits were not regular, and there was no telling when they would again have the opportunity to shop for American goods in their floating commissary.

The Navy had come full circle from the days of the bumboats. Once dependent upon local merchants to supply its ships with non-ration foodstuffs, the Navy now brought food for sale to various foreign ports to support American families stationed nearby.

The *Northampton* kept up its commissary duties for several years, until permanent commissaries were established for families stationed at European bases.

*— The Northampton was launched January 27, 1951. An earlier ship of the same name, designated CA-26, had been sunk in the Pacific during World War II in the Battle of Tassafaronga, near Guadalcanal, on the night of November 30 — December 1, 1942. (Source: U.S. Naval Historical Center)



THE SHIP'S COMMANDING OFFICER, Capt. C. E. Weakly, Mrs. J. E. Whatton, and Mrs. Weakly examine some of the items available at the *Northampton*'s commissary. The store sold some exchange items, but it was meant primarily to provide American foods to Sixth Fleet families stationed in the Mediterranean.



1959: FORMOSA, Taiwan, loading dock. An American sailor checks the invoice while local national employees unload a truck at the Navy commissary in Taipei. Note the traditional Crescent Moon symbol, denoting subsistence items. Military Market, Army Times Publications

commissary by September 1960, while Naval Communications Station San Miguel first opened its commissary in 1972. The stores at Clark, San Miguel, and Subic Bay did not close until 1991-92, when politics, the volcanic eruption of Mount Pinatubo, and the arrival of Supertyphoon Yunya forced their closure (see Chapter 10).

Naval Station Sangley Point had a store from 1960-63. John Hay Air Base (formerly called both Baguio and Camp John Hay), 175 miles north of Manila, had a commissary by 1934, and may have had one as early as 1900. A new store opened at John Hay in 1968, only to close in October 1977.

OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDS AND ELSEWHERE IN ASIA

Guam: As previously noted, between 1945 and November 1955, Air Force and Army personnel on Guam had done their

1959: GUAM. Produce grown on Tinian was sold at the Navy store on Naval Station Guam. Even in 1959, when prices on everything were far lower than today, four cents per pound was a great price. U.S. Navy Historical Center

commissary shopping in a Quonset hut about five miles from Andersen Air Base, in the Marbo housing and services support area. By November 1955, a new, modern commissary opened at Andersen.

In short order, the old "Marbo" (Marianas-Bonin command) area became, in Military Market's words, "a ghost town." The Andersen store had a 100,000-square-foot warehouse and a telephone ordering system, whereby orders could be phoned in and picked up later. Bag boys carried customers' groceries outside, where they could drive up to a loading zone close to the entrance.

Following the successful model of Nasugbu Beach, the Andersen store was placed next to the new base exchange as an integral part of a base community center that would eventually include an ultramodern chapel and an air-conditioned motion picture theater. In late 1955, conveyor belts were installed at the checkout stations.

The Navy Supply Depot on Guam had opened a commissary in 1946, using two Quonset huts. In 1960, the Navy opened a newly built commissary in an area known as Orote. It would not be replaced for another thirty-five years.

As a special customer service, planes from Guam frequently went ninety-three miles to Tinian to pick up several tons of fresh fruit and vegetables. The Tinian produce was sold at low prices in the Navy and Air Force commissaries on Guam. Produce from the states didn't arrive nearly as fresh as the goods from Tinian.

Not far from Guam in the Bonin Islands was Naval Facility Chi Chi Jima, where a branch commissary of the new Orote commissary opened in May 1960. It stayed in operation at least until 1968. A store at Eta Jima, an Army post, was active in the early 1950s, as was a commissary that opened in 1960 at Naval Station Saipan.

Nationalist China and Formosa (Taiwan): The store that opened in 1957 at the Naval Air Station at Taipei was the main site of the commissary complex on that island. By 1967, it had branches at Taichung, Tainan, Chia Yi, and Kauhsiung Island.

Thailand: A long-forgotten store existed in or near Bangkok in 1960.

THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Mewfoundland: There were four stores in Newfoundland in the 1950s and 1960s. The longest-lived was at Naval Facility Argentia, 1958-94. The others lasted for just a few years at Ernest Harmon, Goose, and Pepperrell Air Force Bases.

Food sales at Argentia were initially part of the exchange operation there, but in 1958 the Navy opened a sales commissary. It had a public address system that piped music into the store, a two-tone green interior, green and gold floor tile, fluorescent lights, and five checkouts. Produce and meat were mostly pre-packaged. The store's stock was procured through Bayonne, New Jersey, and was supplemented by goods purchased from vendors in St. John's, Newfoundland.

Bermuda: By 1960, there were three stores in Bermuda: Kindley Air Base, with a commissary as early as 1955; Naval Air Station Bermuda, where a store opened in 1960-61; and NAS Bermuda Annex, which

had its first store by 1960. The main Bermuda store later became a Navy exchange mart (NEXMART) that was supported by the Defense Commissary Agency, 1991-93.

The Caribbean: A commissary was open for business at Naval Station Trinidad in the British West Indies at least from the late 1950s to 1968. A store known as San Jose in the U.S. Virgin Islands was opened in 1954. There was a submarine base on St. Thomas, and although its status regarding a commissary isn't known, chances are good there was a small commissary or exchange located there.

In Puerto Rico, Fort Brooke, Naval Station San Juan, and Naval Station Roosevelt Roads all had commissaries by the mid-1960s. Fort Buchanan had a store by 1954, and it still operates to this day.

SOUTH AMERICA AND PANAMA

In Panama, there were stores at Corozal, Forts Brook, Davis, Gulick, Kobbe, and Sherman, and Naval Stations Coco Solo and Rodman in the 1950s.

Throughout the last half of the twentieth century the biggest and most important commissary in Panama was the one at Corozal. At one time or another, most of the stores in Panama had been annexes of this store. It was located next door to the American central distribution center and across the highway from the main U.S. cold storage facility and ice plant in Panama. Within sight of the canal's east bank, it was centrally located, along a highway and near the Miraflores locks, Panama City, Balboa, Fort Clayton, and Albrook Air Base.

Corozal's big commissary had opened in 1948. Housed in a former warehouse, it had first- and second-floor offices, a meat market and counter, a meat-cutting room, a delicatessen, refrigerated display cases in the dairy area, a fresh fruit and vegetable section, a cigarette counter, and an abundance of grocery shelving. By the mid-1950s, Corozal had folding basket carriers and improved lighting.

Fort Kobbe, an Army post on the west side of the canal, had opened a commissary by the 1950s. It later moved to Howard Air Base, adjacent to Fort Kobbe, around 1976.

PERSONNEL BEWARE of COUNTER SPIES!

Sleepless enemy are at work day and night at every military installation, and in town, to steal away your valuable privileges. Don't let them trick you! Don't play into their hands. Don't take chances with your own financial securiy!

Who are these thieves, and what do they want?

Some are honest but misguided individuals in business or in government. Others are greedy people and unscrupulous trade associations.

Together they are scheming constantly and working tirelessly. Their goals: To take away your Commissary and Exchange rights entirely—or reduce them to little more than a few tobacco and toothpaste shelves—or turn them over to commercial operators who would have you at their mercy!

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THEM. They have several times come close to great success. They are working secretly, right now, and always.

They are shrewd and cumning enough to influence members of powerful Congressional Committees and such bodies as the Hoover Commission on Government Re-organization.

Their investigators, their Spies, are out to spy-on post, in town, in public conveyances and meeting places and in homes-on what YOU do at your Exchange or Commissary Counters.

THEY WANT TO HEAR ABOUT OR TO CATCH YOU in abuses of your Commissary or Exchange privileges. Never give them that chance!

Protect Your Commissary Store and Exchange Counter Rights From These Counter Spies This Way:

DON'T BUY FOR OTHER PEOPLE. Buying for unauthorized persons is against the law and regulations and plays into the hands of these "espionage" agents.

DON'T LOAN YOUR COMISSARY CARD. It's just plain cheating, as well as unlawful. And will really cheat YOU most of all!

DON'T BRAG ABOUT PRICES at your Exchange or Commissary. This is the way to antagonize civilian friends and the merchants in town. It starts rumors and builds up resentment against your legitimate Commissary and Exchange buying opportunities.

ENCOURAGE OTHERS to abide by the rules. Play fair with other service people, the town inerchants and your government.

THE FUTURE of the Commissary and Exchange Privilege is in the hands of the individual patron at all times. YOU, the patron, must protect, keep and use these privileges. Or you can play into the hands of their "Counter" Spies and abuse—and lose—these rights! It's up to you, and you and YOU!

COMMISSARY & EXCHANGE OFFICERS OR MANAGERS: We will glodly furnish you FREE Reprints of this page... to post on bulletin boards, hand to customers... in quantities up to I each of your Cammissary Store Card holders or regular Exchange customers, delivered to you without charge—a long as the supply lasts! Write, on your official stationery, with number required ta: Merchandise Manager, Military Morket, 3132 M St., N.W., Washington 7, D.C.

1955: 'COUNTER SPIES.' The admonishments contained in this ad were the result of paranoia that had been caused by several outright attacks upon the commissary benefit.

Military Market, Army Times Publications



1958: SHEPPARD Air Force Base, Texas. Maj. Gen. James H. Wallace and Capt. Alfonse R. W. Channing, commissary store officer, look over items in the new commissary at Sheppard Air Force Base. In those days, the CSO was usually a uniformed officer. Later, the positions were held by NCOs, and, later still, by civilians. Military Market, Army Times Publications

COMMISSARY STORE OFFICERS

Before and during World War II, the people who ran each of these stores had been almost entirely in uniform. By the late 1950s this was no longer the case. Civilians were hired to free up military store workers for other duties.

Some commissaries, such as the one at Fort Riley, Kansas, were phasing in civilian commissary store officers as early as 1950. The first civilian CSO may have been Don Long, hired at Fort Riley that year (see feature on pages 226-227). Others, such as Norton Air Force Base, California, already had civilian commissary store officers. But military or civilian, many of them viewed their positions as largely thankless, go-nowhere jobs. Since there was no career field in commissary operations, civilians saw a commissary job as just a foot in the door of federal employment. Those in uniform saw it as a place to spend a year or two in relative peace—and boredom.

The vast majority of military members had received little training in commissary operations. The lack of a formal military career field in professional commissary work meant there was no hope for advancement, even if service members did a superlative job. Therefore, it was likely they would eventually leave the store for a completely different position. For civilians, no hope of career advancement meant they had no incentive to stay on the job once better prospects came along.

Both civilian and military staff members were acutely conscious that they were working in makeshift facilities, a fact that hurt morale. In essence, the entire career field was not conducive to encouraging advancement or fostering job loyalty, dedication, or high morale.

Prior to 1960, most commissary store workers, department managers, store managers, and commissary officers were activeduty personnel. From the 1920s through the 1960s, the title of the man in charge of all store operations usually belonged to a commissioned officer; thus the origin of the term commissary officer. His immediate subordinates were usually a noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) and a civilian store manager.

PROFESSIONALIZING STORE STAFFS

Before 1970, the majority of any store's staff was usually made up of enlisted personnel who did everything from run departments, serve as cashiers, and carry customers' purchases to their cars. If there were civilian employees, they were primarily used as cashiers or as administrative personnel. Civilian cashiers were usually spouses of active duty personnel and often worked part time. Military personnel were almost always male; the civilians were, by and large, female. By 1957, commissaries were having trouble attracting and retaining cashiers because of the positions' low grade and low pay.

In 1946, the Navy (specifically, the Navy Ship's Store Office, NSSO) was the first to begin changing this situation, and the Marines soon did likewise. However, it took the Army and Air Force until the 1970s to establish commissary agencies and career fields for civilians and military. Playing a pivotal role in this attitude reversal was the Philbin Subcommittee, which had considerably softened its stance on commissaries since the early 1950s. In a report released on December 22, 1970, the subcommittee called for closer Defense Department involvement with leadership and control over commissary operations, more flexible finance methods from the Army, and, significantly, better career opportunities for those assigned to the commissary resale function.

BAGGERS: INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS

The relationship between stores and baggers has not always been cordial, but it has been mutually beneficial. Baggers (see feature, pages 180-81) could not do business without the stores; without the baggers the stores could not function efficiently. Historically, most baggers have been interested in only a moderate supplementary income, not full employee status.

On several occasions, baggers at scattered locations have felt poorly treated or misused. Sometimes they claimed they were asked to perform duties that were not within the scope of the license agreements, such as window washing or aisle cleanup. Over the years, there has been some controversy over the baggers' legal status: that is, were they employees or licensees? In 1957, The Quartermaster Review expressed the unofficial opinion that the "tip boys" were licensees, an opinion upheld by the Roth-Stone amendment to the Military Appropriations Act of 1978. The licensee designation relieved the stores of liability from accidents involving or caused by the baggers; it also meant that the baggers and the stores were bound by a licensee agreement at each base. Thus, baggers could not be required to perform any services beyond those specified in the agreement.

ATTEMPTS TO SCUTTLE THE RIDER AND SURCHARGE

By January 1955, having won a few victories in Congress, some military spokesmen were feeling more confident about preserving the benefit. They even suggested the commissary surcharge—at the time, it was 3 percent in CONUS and 3.5 percent overseas—should be eliminated.

They also suggested the restrictive rider could be eliminated. That was, of course, the rider requiring the Department of Defense to certify specific commissaries as



HERBERT HOOVER, former president of the United States, headed the Commission on the Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government (1949-55), commonly known as the Hoover Commission. He called for commissaries to be reduced in number and in scope.

Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Association

being necessary because "items normally procured from commissary stores are not otherwise available at a reasonable distance and a reasonable price in satisfactory quality and quantity." The rider had been contained in the past few Defense appropriations bills and was the legal restriction cited by civilian supermarkets claiming unfair competition from commissaries.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Philbin Subcommittee and the rider it had spawned had been widely perceived as a mean-spirited assault against the commissaries. In sharp contrast was a commissary-friendly report compiled in January 1954 by the Office of the Quartermaster General. Its words are as appropriate in the twenty-first century as they were a half-century ago. It stated:

"The privilege of purchasing in commissary stores at cost (wholesale) price is considered a part of military pay. This is based on congressional consideration of fringe benefits in establishing the military pay rate." The clearest consideration is contained in House report No. 779, which stated: "In establishing the proposed pay scale the matter of hidden benefits such as hospitalization, commissary and post exchange privileges were considered. ... To attract and retain qualified career personnel it is ... essential that families quartered on military installations be provided the same facilities and convenience afforded by an average American community. ... a commissary store is a necessity at small isolated military installations such as Deseret Chemical depot, Utah, which is nineteen miles from the nearest commercial facilities, because the number of families quartered on the installation are insufficient to support a post exchange or commercial grocery store."

In 1954, a special advisory committee on fiscal organization and procedures reported to the Department of Defense that commissaries "from their inception in 1866 ... have been considered not only a convenience to military personnel but a form of fringe benefit supplementing military pay." [Emphasis added] This statement was ignored by commissary opponents who preferred to believe that commissaries had simply been meant only for remote posts where there was nowhere else to shop.



1957: MARINE CORPS CSO Conference, probably in Washington, D.C. The services periodically had their commissary professionals attend conferences, exchange ideas, and receive training. This Marine Corps group met in August 1957, at Headquarters, USMC. Sitting from left: Capt. D. F. Layman, HQMC (CSI); Lt. Col. N. G. Kingsbury, Cherry Point; Brig. Gen. W. P. Battell, HQMC (CS); Maj. J. Weidner, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina (Supply School); Maj. G. J. Edelmann, Jr., HQMC (CSS). Standing from left: Sgt. J. L. Crouch, HQMC (CSS); Capt. J. Kader, Camp Pendleton, California; CWO W. J. Cross, FPAO #3, Philadelphia; Capt. J. A. Davis, Barstow, California; 1st Lt. W. C. Flaherty, HQMC (CSS); Capt. W. T. Howland, Quantico, Virginia; Master Sgt. D. H. Hartline, Quantico, Virginia; J. C. Braund, HQMC (CSS); R. Hoogendam, Cherry Point, North Carolina; Capt. W. M. Wright, Cherry Point, North Carolina; 1st Lt. J. E. Redmond, Parris Island, South Carolina; Capt. P. W. Shaefer, El Toro, Calif; Capt. L. P. Day, HQMC (CSI); Capt. J. Cline, Jr., Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; Capt. R. G. Amend, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii; Capt. W. J. Reid, Twentynine Palms, California. DeCA historical file





THE LINK BETWEEN **COMMISSARIES AND MORALE**

In May 1955, two years after the near-disaster of 1953, commissaries were under attack again. It was barely three months since newly elected congressmen had taken their seats on the Hill when the Hoover Commission formed in 1949headed by former President Herbert Hoover and officially known as the Commission on the Organization of the Executive Branch of the Governmentsubmitted its first report to Congress. Titled Report on Business Enterprises, it made four recommendations regarding commissaries, including: commissary operations be contracted out; prices in the stores be made adequate to cover all the costs; and that commissaries and exchanges should be located only where "adequate or reasonably convenient services are not available."

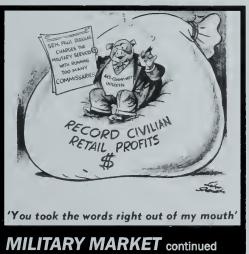
Many people weighed in on these proposals. Perhaps the most eloquent was Air Force Secretary Harold E. Talbott, who spoke during graduation exercises at the Air War College and the Air Command and Staff Colleges. He opposed the commission's conclusions, saying that the exchange and commissary services "should be extended and their prices reduced." He also asserted the commission's recommendations were "in error" and had "an adverse effect on the morale of the armed forces," so the Air Force would oppose their implementation. This is one of the earliest known statements by a high-ranking government official linking commissaries to military morale.

The Defense Department agreed with Talbott, and the following January it rejected all of the Hoover Commission's recommendations concerning exchanges and commissaries. Military Market magazine believed the administration, with retired five-star Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower now president, would adopt the Defense Department position in its entirety and effectively kill this latest threat. This prediction proved inaccurate.

However, commissary backers did enjoy one victory in 1955. The new



1961: TREASURE ISLAND, California. This naval air station was established in the 1930s, and its first commissary opened during World War II. The store banned smoking in the store—three years before the surgeon general placed the first health-risk warning on cigarette packs. This store remained in business until 1997, when BRAC closed the station. DeCA historical file.



CHAPTER 8

publishing scathing cartoons begun by The Cooperator, using the image of a robberbaron pig to depict big-business opponents of commissaries. This cartoon took Sen. Paul Douglas to task for his attacks on commissaries. Military Market, Army Times Publications

Defense Appropriations Act for fiscal 1956 required the Defense Department to gain approval from congressional appropriations committees before dropping any military business activities, particularly commissaries and exchanges.

THE SINGLE-MANAGER SYSTEM

In July 1955, the Hoover Commission now called the second Hoover Commission after its initial report—recommended that common military logistics support and financial management practices should have centralized management. Specifically, the commission declared that a separate, civilian-managed agency be

created within DoD to administer the military services' redundant supply and service activities.

The services feared such an agency could be less responsive than their own processes and could jeopardize the success of military operations. Congress was just as concerned about the Hoover Commission's claims of the military services' waste and inefficiency. The compromise solution, as conceived by Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson, was to appoint each of the three department secretaries as the single manager for certain operating agencies that handled specific groups of commodity supply and services.

Theoretically, the secretaries as single managers would be able to reduce costs by centralizing wholesale stocks. If the services adopted the same items as standard, the supply process would be simplified and costs would drop. The concept was an important step toward integrated supply management within DoD. Under this system, the management of food and clothing, including food for commissaries, became the Army's responsibility.

FNDLESS POSSIBILITIES

In February 1957, The Military Market (the descendant of The Cooperator, which had strenuously defended the commissaries during the crisis of 1953) ran an editorial stating its opposition to combining commissaries with exchanges. The idea had been in the wind since 1946.

Later that year, the Defense Advisory Committee on Professional and Technical Compensation recommended against trying to make commissaries entirely self-supporting. It held that the Eisenhower Administration's proposal would diminish the commissary benefit because self-supporting "translates unrealistically into higher costs for the commissary patrons."

PRIVATIZATION, 1959-STYLE

But the commissaries were just beginning to feel the heat. In a 1959 speech to the Senate, Senator Paul Douglas (D-Illinois) attacked the commissaries on a number of points, adopting the mistaken assumptions emphasized by the Philbin Subcommittee. He said the 1867 legislation

was meant to "provide commissary stores where adequate commercial facilities were not available." In his opinion, there were too many commissaries, and there were many stores operating at posts where commercial activities were conveniently available. He alleged the commissaries employed too many service members who were needed elsewhere and that "a full combat division is being lost by this misuse of military personnel." Douglas claimed the commissaries were "perhaps the most glaring example of an area where the government competes with private enterprise. I do not believe in the socialization of grocery stores, and military socialism is still socialism!"

Douglas said this a few years after the Red Scare of the 1950s, at a time when equating the commissaries with socialism was guaranteed to attract an audience and create a following.

Douglas' position, that in most places the private sector could do the commissaries' job, was open to debate. But his statement concerning the numbers of military personnel involved was an exaggera-



1962: JAMES CONNALLY Air Force Base, Texas. Air Force Staff Sgt. William Heard, chief of merchandising at this commissary, poses in front of shelves stocked by civilian employees Bradfield and Rains (their first names are not available). In the 1960s, military personnel still ran the individual stores.

Military Market, Army Times Publications

tion, even in those days when the stores did make use of numerous service members. Navy personnel who worked in the stores were performing their shore duty. No one in the Army, Air Force, or Marine Corps who was eligible for a combat role performed commissary duties. Such duties were left to quartermaster and services personnel. The numbers of service members working at the commissaries were nowhere near division strength. No one was being "lost" for combat duty.

Douglas had served as a Marine and may well have had commissary shopping experience. Seldom has a military retiree so thoroughly denounced the benefit. Yet he made no mention of overseas commissaries. They were all temporarily safe because no one had yet come up with a way to replace them.

Military Market responded with an editorial written by editor LaMonte F. Davis: "Once again, the biannual attacks on military stores are being made. Regularly, and no one knows why, such attacks have come in the odd-numbered years almost without exception since World War II."

Davis was being coy, because from a distance of five decades, it is obvious why the attacks came in odd-numbered years. Even-numbered years are election years, and the anti-commissary lobby remains inactive while awaiting the election results. Afterwards, they begin their work. In 1959, the results of their endeavors included Douglas' attacks and the retail food industry's anti-commissary campaign.

Davis' editorial noted that merchant groups in California were attacking the commissaries, and California, with ninety-seven military bases, had the most bases of any state. He observed:

"No merchant ever complains because a base—and its commissary—is being set up in his town, because he knows it will bring many more dollars in his cash registers. Talk about moving a base away from his town and

then the merchants—and their congressmen—really scream. ... Headline-seeking attacks [on the commissaries] should contain all the facts. Then the American taxpayers who foot the bills will have the complete picture."

COMMISSARY DEFENDERS

Fortunately, commissaries were never without their defenders. A new publication, Exchange and Commissary News, came out in September 1962. Headed by Murry H. Greenwald, the magazine covered all the military resale services and added its voice to defending the commissary benefit. This first issue ran just a month before the Cuban missile crisis, at a time when the military was appreciated far more than would be the case a few years later.

In 1963, Col. Elwood D. McSherry, commanding officer of the Army Subsistence Center in Chicago, stated, "Commissary stores contribute significantly to the high state of morale existing within our armed forces. The commissary benefit is an integral part of soldier pay and is considered a part of the total remuneration and



consideration afforded by a military career. ... The basic mission of the commissary store is to provide for sale of designated essential subsistence and household requirements to authorized patrons at installations where adequate commercial facilities are not conveniently available, or when commercial facilities do not sell such supplies at reasonable prices."

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING OFFICE REPORT

For the next few years the change in administrations and events in the Cold War helped the commissaries escape those who would do them in. Then in 1964, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) published a report to the Congressional Joint Economic Committee. Titled Failure to Curtail Government Expense of Military Commissary Stores in Continental United States Where Adequate Commercial Facilities are

Available, it took the services to task for continuing to run commissaries in areas where civilian stores were readily available. It did not address the store's cost savings for enlisted men.

GAO personnel visited eight commissaries in the Washington, D.C., area only, leaving readers to view the capitol-area stores as typical in operations and clientele. The report emphasized the GAO's conviction that the commissary-store privilege had become an increasingly important benefit only because the military departments were determined to continue the system.

The official criteria being used to evaluate whether or not a commissary should remain open had gone on the books in 1953. It remained largely unchanged with the lone exception of 1956, when they were briefly repealed. GAO declared it unreasonable that commissary prices represent a 20-percent savings over commercial stores, and that

civilian stores be a ten-minute drive from the commissary. Commissary opponents agreed with the GAO that the 20-percent figure was too high, and the travel time was "unrealistically short."

Their reasoning was that most commissary shoppers lived off-base, far away from the commissary store, and had commercial stores closer to their residences. As privately owned vehicles became more common among the military, the distance requirement would change. The GAO believed, "Under any realistic criteria, more than half the commissary stores would be closed." It recommended that Congress consider "any inadequacy of pay and allowances on its own merits, apart from the need for commissary stores." This was in itself unrealistic; the two were inextricably tied.

The report also recommended that until Congress acted to clarify its position on commissaries, the annual certification survey required by the 1953 Appropriations Act be omitted, saving the annual \$100,000 expense needed to conduct the survey.

GAO also persisted in repeatedly asserting, incorrectly, that commissaries had originally been intended "only for remote posts." The report's entire argument (as well as the law of 1953) was based upon this false assumption.

Inexcusably, at the request of the Joint Economic Committee, the findings of the report had not been submitted to Department of Defense officials for their comment or explanation.

Paradoxically, after all this, the report did recognize that the commissaries had been justified as a fringe benefit that "has become, as a practical matter, a part of the pay structure for military personnel and that, consequently, the curtailment of the fringe benefit would represent a reduction in remuneration and would adversely affect the morale of military personnel."

THE HITS JUST KEPT ON COMING

A 1967 study on military compensation, headed by Rear Adm. L. E. Hubbell, rec-

ommended commissary stores become self-supporting. No action was taken. Then the tumultuous 1968 election intervened, and the Vietnam War took center stage. Almost on cue, 1969 saw renewed attacks on the commissary benefit.

Also in 1969, due to alleged abuses in the commissary systems, an investigation was conducted by Gen. William Wallace Momyer of the Office Special Investigations (OSI). This gave hope to commissary opponents, but the findings were predictable: Most of these problems were attributed to inattention to regulations rather than any criminal intent, fraud, waste, or abuse. The cure would be to establish professional training programs.

In that same year, the Logistics Management Institute (LMI) published its study on commissary stores for the secretary of defense. It addressed numerous shortcomings in the commissaries and



1967: FORT JACKSON. Commissary personnel at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, pose for a photograph. From left: NCOIC Master Sgt. Lem Martin; assistant manager Otis Davis; head cashier Margaret Grace; store manager E. R. Brumble; and commissary officer Oscar Eargle.

Military Market, Army Times Publications

pointed out the advantages of making the stores self-supporting. Privatization, however, was *not* considered a viable option. A few years later, the formation of the U.S. Army Troop Support Agency (TSA) and the Air Force Commissary Service (AFCOMS) would rectify most of the shortcomings identified by the LMI.

A 1970 congressional report supporting the Momyer findings emphasized the need for the creation of a commissary career field. The subsequent creation of the "1144" job series was intended to improve professionalism.

Between July 1971 and March 1972, echoing the Hoover Commission's findings and Air Force Secretary Talbott's rebuttal of the mid-1950s, the House Armed Services Committee's Special Subcommittee on Recruiting and Retention of Military Personnel acknowledged the relation between commissary operations and retention, urged a reorganization of the commissary system and recommended the savings be passed on to the military consumer. This became especially important in 1973, when the end of the military draft made commissaries important in attracting recruits to the all volunteer force.



1969: BARKSDALE Air Force Base, Louisiana. Twelve "piggy-backed" checkout lanes in the store at Barksdale Air Force Base were divided by hollow metal railings in 1969. Although this method was efficient, many customers disliked it; some compared the railings to cattle pens.

Military Market, Army Times Publications



1962: HOMESTEAD Air Force Base, Florida. At the time, 65 percent of the store's staff were military personnel. Here, Air Force Staff Sgt Jim Roberts does a turn as a cashier. Air Force Services and Homestead Air Force Base authorized the active duty staff members to wear whites while on commissary duty; only the pin above Roberts' pocket indicates his active-duty status. DeCA historical file, courtesy of Cal Mullins

SAVINGS AND THE SURCHARGE

In 1954, the surcharge had been increased to 5 percent in the United States and 4 percent overseas. Nine years later, in 1963, excess surcharge funds were authorized for commissary improvements.

Each service collected the surcharge differently. The Air Force was able to reduce its surcharge rate from 3 percent stateside and 2.5 percent overseas to a flat 2 percent rate everywhere.

In 1969, surcharge funds were specifically intended for commissary supplies and maintenance. Construction costs came out of general tax revenues, as did wages paid to commissary workers. As it happened, that was the year that the national media dropped a bombshell on commissaries. U.S. News & World Report ran an article on commissaries that gave the impression that the taxpayers were paying the military's grocery bills. This article was indicative of the negative press commissaries received. It was printed next to an unflattering feature about the exchanges, giving the reader an overall bad impression of both retail functions.

According to the article, "The average shopper runs up a bill of \$34 each time he visits Cameron Station. Officials say that the same basketful would cost the customer \$50 in a regular supermarket." Although this statement implied taxpayers were paying 32 percent of the military's grocery bill, it also shows commissaries were providing a 32-percent savings.

The magazine did not mention that military personnel themselves were taxpayers,

that the commissaries had an important role in boosting morale and personnel retention, and that the commissary benefit was part of the overall compensation package.

By the turn of the century, a \$34 grocery bill was a thing of the past, but the savings percentage was almost exactly what it had been in 1969.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

In the 1950s and 1960s, quality customer service was often difficult to achieve. The commissaries and their staffs were often too small and inadequate to handle the volume of customer traffic. Few commissaries were up to civilian standards. Still, makeshift arrangements often led to welcome renovations such as the installation of newer equipment or the addition of more



shelf, freezer, and floor space. Some stores were more willing than others to make efforts to please their clientele. Much rested on the shoulders of the individual commissary officer or in the hands of the installation commander.

For years, commissaries published local monthly price lists for their eligible customers. The lists usually included pertinent references to regulations and local policies and hours of operation. In recent times, this practice has fallen into disfavor. Some persons viewed the practice as advertising, which is not permitted off the installation. It was also widely perceived that civilian merchants seeing the prices would object to their congressmen and complain about unfair government competition—even though commissaries cannot sell to civilian customers.

In commissaries and civilian stores alike,

stock lists began to increase after World War II. The economy, unshackled from wartime restrictions, scarcities, and rationing, had shifted gears and was becoming a consumer economy. The availability of products, the explosion of new products onto the market, the flashy new packaging, and the tremendous growth of the American consumer economy all changed the way Americans shopped. More sophisticated advertising, including a flood of commercials on radio and, after 1947, on television, touted hundreds of new products. As the 1970s approached, the economy was increasingly influenced by baby boomers, and the fast-food franchises began to make themselves felt on the shelves of grocery stores and, ultimately, in the commissaries.

Commissary shoppers started asking for new products to be stocked in large quantities and displayed in an appealing fashion in a modern, sizable building. Soon the old commissary sales stores would be replaced by bigger stores with more checkouts and more product lines, but no home delivery.

CHANGING TASTES, PRODUCTS

Perhaps nothing demonstrates changing tastes as much as a 1957 article in *The Quartermaster Review* that mentioned stocking of fresh rabbit in commissary meat departments. Although it had been a traditional American dish with a seemingly endless supply, rabbit had already lost much of its appeal. The commercialization of the image of the Easter Bunny, the popular cartoon character Bugs Bunny, and the general cute, fuzzy nature of the animal combined to make the meat distinctly unpleasant to children and not a few adults. This item would be difficult to find in com-

missaries and most civilian markets within two decades. By the turn of the century, demand for rabbit had almost disappeared except as a strictly local preference.

The same article noted that most commissary officers had little or no knowledge about meat cutting and therefore let the head meat cutter run the meat department. However, because of the lack of an Armywide standard cutting method, every meat cutter had different training, used different methods, and even had different names for the same cuts of meat. At the time, this typified the lack of professional training that plagued the commissaries. It also recalls E. J. Janota's experience in Greece (see feature, pages 184-85).

PRODUCTS TO PLEASE THE CUSTOMERS

In an effort to please more customers, items were constantly added to the stock lists. At the same time, the commissaries assisted worthy organizations. In July 1955, Air Force stores were authorized to stock and sell brooms, mops, and other Skilcraft products, which were made by individuals who were visually impaired. Local purchases were approved for stores in the United States; overseas supplies would come through the normal supply channels.

Five years later, the Navy's Bureau of Supplies and Accounts Manual limited the number of line items authorized for Navy commissary stores to 1,850. In an era when civilian markets were offering three times that number, this seemed like a mistake, but the whole purpose of the limitation was budgetary. There was a need to reduce both the workload and the personnel requirements to meet staffing limitations. These were necessary for the Navy to operate within its budget. The problem was it was going to detract from the benefit, and this would harm the customers.

The Navy's Commissary Store Courier tried to explain, "There is a fundamental difference in the purpose of commissary stores and commercial supermarkets. ... commissary stores are not in competition and are not required to make a profit." In other words, commissaries did not have to worry about supplying every single product the

customers wanted; this level of service was not vital for their commissaries to survive. The commissaries would provide what they could, within reason.

In the 1940s and early 1950s, installation commissaries worldwide formed item selection boards to determine what products their stores would carry. The boards consisted of commissary personnel, military members, and spouses. They heard sales pitches from industry representatives and sampled food items. Spouses often were the majority of the members, which was only fair; they were the ones who did the majority of the purchasing and cooking.

By 1959, boards were convened at the regional level to select items to be stocked by commissary stores in a given area. This took the power of product selection out of spouses' hands. In deference to local tastes and preferences, local selection boards still existed, but by 1962 they were largely limited to choosing from items pre-selected by the regional boards.

Several regional boards existed in the United States, the Pacific, and Europe, and they made decisions that governed what the commissaries of all services would stock for sale. At that time stock lists were still limited to less than two thousand items. However, the regional boards had a tough time keeping below the two-thousand-item threshold as stores grew bigger and had more shelf space, and the American food industry churned out an ever-increasing number of products.

Regional board meetings were held every six months. They lasted several days and were labor intensive, receiving presentations from vendor representatives who gave samples and a sales pitch. The reps complained, sometimes bitterly, that their allotted presentation time of ten minutes per product was inadequate. But as it was, the boards were swamped and worked from dawn to dusk, examining and sampling new products and reexamining items that had once been on the stock list but had been supplanted. The boards considered the merits of anywhere from 1,500 to 3,000 items at every meeting.

Mirroring a quandary faced by the Defense Commissary Agency forty years later, the boards' biggest asset was, simultaneously, their biggest drawback: Centralizing the decision-making and buying processes simplified things at all levels, but it also removed the stores' abilities to cater to local preferences.

So many new products were entering the



1967: JACKSONVILLE. The commissary at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, was one of several stores located across the street from storage facilities. While some stores such as Fort Riley, Kansas, used underground conveyors to move product from warehouse to sales store, Jacksonville used the overhead conveyor seen here. Military Market, Army Times Publications



market, the commissaries had to expand their stock lists or risk losing their clientele. By 1967, Navy commissaries were authorized to stock 2,275 grocery department items (not including troop issue), although most stores did not have enough room for all of them. In 1970, Air Force Manual 145-1 limited Air Force stores to 2,500 items. Like the Navy, the reason for the limitation was primarily a lack of space.

Within the next few years, regulations restricting the number of line items carried

by Army, Navy, and Air Force commissaries were dropped. The only limit that remained was the amount of available shelf space, which was a real problem in older, smaller stores. Shelving started to get taller, and new stores got bigger.

TOBACCO

One high-demand product that was important enough to be called a "destination item" by all the services—that is, an item that by itself could draw customers into the store—was tobacco, especially in the form of cigarettes (see sidebar on Tobacco, Volume 2, pages 504-05) In 1964, the health warning of the U.S. surgeon general first appeared on packs of cigarettes, but there was little, if any, drop-off in commissary tobacco sales as a result. There was considerable discussion about whether the armed services should ban the use of tobacco. This question led to debates about whether the commissaries and exchanges should pull cigarettes from the shelves. Conventional

wisdom at the time was that as long as it remained a legal product, Congress authorized its sale, and if the demand was heavy, the stores would sell it.

Nine years later, starting in July 1973, the Marine Corps would be the first service to ban cigarettes in its commissaries. Even then, they were available in the other services' commissaries and in the Marines' exchanges, so its disappearance from USMC commissaries was more a matter of public relations than an actual, all-out ban. Cigarettes would remain in most commissaries for the rest of the century, even after the military began to discourage its use.

HEALTH AND BEAUTY AIDS AND MANUFACTURERS' COUPONS

A limited number of personal hygiene products and toiletries had always been sold in the commissaries, but it was not until 1969 that one of the services—this time, the Air Force—allowed the sale of health and beauty aids products in its commissaries. This was done on a test basis, but it was successful enough that the Army did the same the following year.

During an interview with *Military Market* in 1972, a group of five enlisted spouses and two officer spouses agreed that some commissaries were making redemption of manufacturer's coupons overly complicated and difficult. All agreed that they would like to see the stores make a better effort to redeem coupons.

The Navy wives in the group also commented that they found it irritating that Navy commissaries did not stock health and beauty aids. It may have been coincidental, but a month after the publication of the *Military Market* panel's discussion, the Navy began allowing the sale of health and beauty aids in its commissaries.

KEEPING CUSTOMERS HAPPY IN EUROPE

In 1968, a Defense Department study found that customers were dissatisfied with the brand, quality, and prices of items stocked by Army and Air Force commissaries in Europe.

As a result, the European Commissary

Resale Item Selection Board (ECRIB) for commissary stores in Germany and Belgium was abolished. Its function was transferred to the Army's Office of the Chief of Support Services in Washington.

While keeping the customers happy was one of the commissaries' primary goals, it did not always seem to be an overriding concern. Maybe that was because the customers knew they were getting good prices and would continue to patronize the commissaries despite the stores' shortcomings.

CREDIT OVERSEAS

Buying food on credit had been a practice carried on by American soldiers at least since the time of the Civil War, but that practice was now coming to an end. All Air Force commissaries in Germany switched from a credit basis to a cash-and-carry policy as of April 1, 1955. The switch was intended to reduce accounting costs. Although most Army stores still allowed customers to use credit accounts, some overseas stores did make the switch from credit to cash. The Nürnberg [Americanized as *Nuremberg*] commissary in Germany made the change in November 1955.

Most customers easily adjusted. One shopper said that shopping on credit and then having to pay a bill for food at the end of the month, with the food already gone, was like "buying a dead horse." Ironically, fifty years later, it's still being done—not with local store accounts, but with personal credit cards.

COMMISSARY ORGANIZATIONS, 1950-70

Throughout the 1960s, the central offices for Army commissaries were at the U.S. Army Subsistence Center in Chicago. The center was an arm of the Quartermaster Corps, but after 1962 the center was on its own. It did business with the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) and the Defense Personnel Support Center (DPSC) in Philadelphia. The Marine Corps stores answered to the U.S. Marine Corps head-quarters, which at the time was located in the Navy Annex in Arlington, Virginia. The central offices of the Navy Ship's Store Offices (NSSO) were in Brooklyn, New

York. Air Force commissaries fell under the Air Materiel command, which alternated locations between Marietta, Georgia, and the Middletown Air Materiel Area at Olmstead Air Force Base, Pennsylvania. In 1960, the Air Force Services Division, which had partial responsibility for Air Force stores, moved to Philadelphia.

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS COMMISSARIES

The NSSO had been established in 1946. In 1955, a commissary store division was established at NSSO headquarters. Navy Cmdr. Judd Greene was its first director. By June 1965, Navy commissary officers oversaw all commissary operations, from buying to selling.

In 1967 the Navy Resale Systems (NRS) assumed direct command of Navy commissary stores. The following year, the Navy Ship's Store Advisory Committee, which had replaced the Bingham Committee, recommended a change in the name of the Navy Ship's Store Office, since the existing title did not accurately reflect the assigned mission. Therefore, on May 26, 1969, the NSSO was redesignated the Navy Resale System Office (NRSO, and sometimes NAVRESO). The designation later changed to NAVRESSO (Navy Resale System Services Office).

AIR FORCE COMMISSARIES

On July 1, 1955, the Air Force, believing that commissary stores were essential to a modern military service, activated the commissary division of the Air Force Stock Fund. In October, the Air Force's 225 commissaries went under the control of the Air Force Services Division's new commissary system. Its mission was to purchase commissary goods for sale; the money from the sales went back into the stock fund. This was the start of the Air Force's version of the "revolving" stock fund, with which new retail items could be purchased. The commissary division was initially allocated \$10 million in addition to food items already on hand.

Before the advent of the stock fund, the Air Force stores had been budgeted by the major commands, individual bases, the surcharge fund, and the Army Quartermaster Corps.

ARMY COMMISSARIES

In 1954, the Army Quartermaster Corps reiterated that the quartermaster general exercised technical supervision over Army commissary sales stores. However, Army commanders were responsible for the training, operations, administration, services, and supply of all commissary sales store activities under their command.

The Army defined the commissary mission as that of "providing subsistence supplies to field rations, garrison rations and hospital messes, troop trains, motor convoys and ambulance trains. The secondary mission is the operation of a commissary store when specifically authorized. A commissary store is established for the purpose of making sales of subsistence articles and miscellaneous household articles to authorized individuals."

The issue and sales missions, and all accounting procedures, were maintained in a combined operation. The Quartermaster Market Center system established prices

monthly for centrally procured articles. In 1954, a surcharge of 5 percent was added to sales in the United States and 4 percent to sales overseas. These figures had increased from just two years previously, and they would continue to fluctuate for the next two decades.

QUARTERMASTERREORGANIZATION

There was a system-wide reorganization of the Army's Office of the Quartermaster General (OQMG) in December 1957. Operating and supervisory functions of the subsistence division's commissary branch were shifted from the Quartermaster General to the newly established Army Subsistence Center in Chicago, under the direct authority of the subsistence division's commissary branch.

The Subsistence Center was assigned to



the assistant quartermaster general for operations, so ultimate responsibility for commissaries still remained with the quartermaster general. Essentially, the quartermaster had simply gone from direct to indirect control of the commissaries. Still, it was the first step in weaning the stores away from the Quartermaster Corps and establishing them in their own right.

MSSA

In 1956, the Military Subsistence Supply Agency (MSSA) was established. As the direct descendant of the Quartermaster Market Center system created in 1941, MSSA was responsible for the purchase, inspection, storage, and distribution of all food items required by all military services. This included the food items for overseas Army and Air Force troop issue and commissary operations. Although the term "all

food items" sounds all-encompassing, there were exceptions. Each stateside installation was still responsible for purchasing its own milk, bread, and brand-name resale items.

THE DEFENSE SUPPLY AGENCY

By 1961, the single manager system established under Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson in 1956 was handling thousands of items, but the concept had fallen short of providing the uniform procedures the Hoover Commission had envisioned. There was little commonality in methodology or nomenclature because each manager operated according to the customs of his own military department. In March, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara convened a panel of high-ranking Defense Department officials to consider ways of improving departmentwide integrated supply management. On August 31, after lengthy debate among the service chiefs and secretaries, McNamara announced the end of the old single-manager system and its replacement by a new

common supply source, the Defense Supply Agency (DSA).

DSA was formally established on October 1, 1961, under the command of Lt. Gen. Andrew T. McNamara (no relation to Secretary McNamara). Officially activated on January 1, 1962, DSA operated in the old munitions building in Washington, D.C., until General McNamara moved his staff into larger facilities at Cameron Station in Alexandria, Virginia.

DSA consolidated numerous responsibilities of the Quartermaster Corps and the single-manager operating agencies. It served as the supply agency for all the armed services, providing supply support, contract administration services, and technical and logistic services on items procured by the military. DSA purchased fuel, clothing, medical supplies, repair and maintenance items, and subsistence, and initially



1964: KEY WEST.

Florida. When this photo was taken, the Naval Air Station Key West commissary store was inside this old tobacco warehouse.

DeCA historical file. courtesy Key West commissary

managed them through eight main supply centers. In 1961, according to McNamara, there were over a million such items.

agency eventually assumed responsibility for the worldwide management of food items, both for troop feeding and for commissary support. DSA was expected to procure and transport high-quality and well-packaged food. Subsistence supply required purchasing fresh, canned, dehydrated, and frozen foods for use in dining halls, in the field, and for sale in military commissaries.

DSA was only a fledgling organization when it was tested by an influx of reservists during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, and again by the military buildup for the Vietnam conflict. Supporting U.S. forces in Vietnam was a severe test of the young agency's supply system. DSA used an accelerated procurement program to meet the extra demand in Southeast Asia.

REVISED REGULATIONS. NEW ORGANIZATIONS

In April 1961, the U.S. Army Subsistence Center in Chicago produced Army Regulation 31-200, "Army Commissary Operating Procedures," by consolidating thirty-two directives. This regulation became the "bible" of Army commissary officers.

The Defense Supply Agency officially assumed the numerous responsibilities of the Quartermaster Corps on January 1, 1962. It would not immediately affect the operations of the Army Subsistence Center in Chicago, which had primary responsibility for Army commissaries. On July 6, 1962, General Order No. 47 transferred the Subsistence Center in Chicago to the Office of Support Services. Three years later, in July 1965, the Army Subsistence Center was disestablished and redesignated the U.S. Army Food Service Center, with primary responsibility for Army commissaries.

Thus, for the first time since 1912, the Quartermaster Corps no longer ran the Army's commissary sales stores.

Meanwhile, also in July 1965, the Defense Subsistence Supply Center (DSSC), Defense Clothing Supply Center (DCSC), and Defense Medical Supply Center (DMSC) were merged to form the Defense Personnel Support Center (DPSC) in Philadelphia. DPSC, as the chief intermediate link between the military and the American food industry, was responsible for buying, inspecting, storing, and distributing food supplies for worldwide consumption by the armed services and other authorized government organizations. It operated under the auspices of the Defense Supply Agency and was jointly staffed by all the services.

The Food Service Center officially began operations on January 1, 1966. It remained in Chicago for five years before moving to Fort Lee, Virginia, in February 1971. There, it became a field support agency, and its responsibilities came under the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics. That same year, Army mess halls officially became known as dining facilities in order to boost their image, as well as the image of the food served there and of the personnel who ran them.

In October 1971, a new Armed Services Commissary Store Regulation was established, superseding the August 1949 version. It updated terminology and changed the accounting system from a calendar year to a fiscal year basis. Eventually, on May 15, 1972, the U.S. Army Food Service Center was renamed the U.S. Army Troop Support Agency (TSA), which had primary responsibility for Army sales commissaries, laundry services, and issue facilities. Army Maj. Gen. John D. McLaughlin was TSA's first commanding officer.

CIVILIAN PARTNERS AND MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE

With the formation of the Defense Supply Agency in 1962, the industry-based Quartermaster Association, which worked with the services to supply commissaries around the world, had subsequently changed its name to the Defense Supply Association. Now, in August 1972, DSA changed its name again, this time to American Logistics Association (ALA), a name it retains to this day.

In 1971, the Army had considered using centralized management with its commissaries, whereby all operational decisions would be made at a central headquarters. Although this seems logical in retrospect, at the time it was an unattractive prospect. Not only did installations fear losing control of their surcharge collections to the commissary headquarters, they disliked the idea of not being able to manage their operating hours and stock assortments.

But by October 1972, the centralized

Navy Commissaries in Vietnam



1963: ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS went to outstanding employees at the Saigon store. Navy CWO R. W. Hughes (left), store assistant officer-in-charge, and Lt. Joe M. Hale, officer-in-charge, stand with award recipients from the Saigon facility. Awards were also presented to employees from the field commissary store at Tan Son Nhut. DeCA historical file



1964: SAIGON, South Vietnam, commissary. Commissary officer Lt. James Thompson (left) escorts Capt. Archie C. Kuntze, commanding officer of the Navy Headquarters Support Activity, Saigon, on a tour of the renovated store. Note the dog food in the cart; even in Vietnam, the commissary provided items for patrons to feed their pets. After 1964, as American military familiy members left South Vietnam and large numbers of combat troops arrived, only DoD and State Department civilian employees, along with a select few military personnel could shop in the Vietnam commissaries. Military Market, Army Times Publications



1965 A SAIGON COMMISSARY. The lower floor of this building held a commissary and an exchange, both run by the Navy. Located on Phan Dinh Phung Street, it was the commissary patronized by Ann Crawford and her children in 1963-64 (see text on opposite page, under "War in Vietnam"). DeCA historical file

management concept had transformed into the home-office model. Put simply, this meant that policy making for commissaries, as well as surcharge funding, would be centralized, but command would be retained at installation level. This concept was fulfilled under TSA in 1973, when TSA headquarters became responsible for centralized technical direction and supervision, but allowed operational control to remain with the installations. TSA called the policy "management assistance." The centralized surcharge funds would benefit installations with small surcharge revenues. Now they could anticipate getting new or remodeled facilities far sooner than before. While they would also benefit from having store personnel who were properly trained, they would still enjoy localized control over stock lists, hours, and store operations.

WAR IN VIETNAM

From August 1964 to March 1973, the United States engaged in a war to support South Vietnam against communist Viet Cong insurgents and the North Vietnamese army. The war came to an end two years after U.S. combat personnel had left the country, when the Communists—in violation of a treaty made with the United States—entered Saigon, the South Vietnamese capital.

During the Vietnam conflict, American service personnel were fed better than in any prior war in the country's history. The official meals provided over forty-five hundred calories per person, per day. Ninety percent of all meals served to U.S. personnel were served hot. The latest in rations—the nutritionally balanced and filling descendant of the C-ration—was the MCI (meal, combat, individual).

Because there were supposed to be no American military families in South Vietnam after 1964, most American military personnel shopped at exchanges. Two commissaries were open in Saigon—one on Phan Dinh Phung Street, another in the Cholon compound in the city's Chinese sector—and there were at least two branch stores: one in the housing area near Tan Son Nhut airport, and another at Long Binh. First the Army, and then the Navy, operated these stores.

However, American military personnel had been in South Vietnam as non-combatant advisors as early as 1954. In those days, before the United States was directly involved in the fighting, some military personnel were accompanied by their families. In 1963-64, Army Capt. Roy Crawford had his wife, Ann, along with their three children, join him on his tour of duty. He could do so because the United States was not yet involved in combat operations.

A free-lance journalist,* Ann Caddell Crawford wrote about the Saigon commissary on Phan Dinh Phung Street in words that would have been as appropriate in 2007, or in 1947, as they were in 1963: "Thank God for the military commissary and exchange. They always followed our military family to the end of the earth, even to Vietnam! Would any chain based on a strictly profit motive serve my family around the world? Would they subject their employees to the risk in Vietnam? Well, our exchange and commissary service never forgot us."

After a few weeks in-country, Mrs. Crawford took the children to the commissary near their Saigon home. That it was a big event is testimony to how important commissaries and exchanges are to Americans stationed overseas: "The kids were ecstatic. At last, they had a touch of home. They wanted to buy everything in the store! The commissary was not large, but it had such things as cereal, peanut butter and jelly, milk, a sampling of frozen meats and veggies, and other household essentials."

There was a downside, but it had nothing to do with the store: "We saw some soldiers shopping, perhaps for their units. There was something really different about a couple of them.... Nowhere in America had we gone shopping with other people carrying hand grenades on their belts. I made a mental note to make future trips to the commissary by myself.... Roy Jr., Jack, and Kathy [the Crawfords' children] would be safer at home. ..."

Flo Dunn, a captain in the WAC (Women's Army Corps) in Vietnam in 1971-72, said, "Most American military in Vietnam lived on installations and in compounds. Some of us lived in downtown Saigon in BOQs or BEQs, and we were authorized BAS.** But most of us couldn't shop at the commissaries. They were mostly for DoD civilians, Embassy and State Department employees, and certain military officers. Single soldiers today sometimes think they can't shop at the commissary, and that's the way it was, in certain places, for a long while."***

THE END OF THE DRAFT

It was the Vietnam War that provided the impetus for abolishing the military draft and establishing the all-volunteer force. Most lawmakers at the time believed that essential to making such a force viable were the benefits prospective military personnel, and their families, would receive in return for their services and sacrifices.

On January 27, 1973, the government ended the military draft. An all-volunteer force would have far-reaching implications for morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) activities and other benefits, which were needed to attract and retain good personnel. Common sense dictated that the commissaries would now become more important as a benefit for troops with families.

^{* —} Ann was a free-lance journalist for publications such as Stars & Stripes and Newsday, and authored the award-winning Customs and Culture of Vietnam, which became, by far, the most popular American guide to the country. In fact, it is still so popular that "pirated" unauthorized editions are still available for sale.

^{**—} Dunn later worked for both TSA (1978-1991) and DeCA (1991-2005). Her mention of BOQ, BEQ, and BAS referred to bachelor officers' quarters, bachelor enlisted quarters, and basic allowance - subsistence.

^{*** —} This was not unique; the same policy applied in Korea, and it didn't change until the 1970s.

1954

1954

1954

CHRONOLOGY of KEY EVENTS

1954

A SPECIAL advisory committee on fiscal organization and procedures reported to the secretary of defense that commissaries, "from their inception in 1866 ... have been considered not only a convenience to military personnel but a form of fringe benefit supplementing military pay."

IN FISCAL 1954, commissary worldwide sales totals were about \$306 million at 438 stores (199 U.S., 239 overseas.) These totals may include troop issue sales. (Hoover Commission Report, 15 May 1955; Military Market, Jun 1955, pp. 20-24)

A NAVY CRUISER, USS Northampton (CC 1), flagship of the U.S. Sixth Fleet, established an onboard commissary that brought American retail goods to families stationed in Mediterranean ports. (Military Market, Aug 1955, p. 8)

ARMY TIMES Publishing Co. printed the first issue of *Military Market* magazine, combining



1954: FORT LEONARD WOOD, Missouri. Prior to scanning, every item had to be individually priced. Here, a clerk marks prices on items using a tray of plastic stampers. Each of these had a pre-set price, ranging from a few cents to \$2. There were 56 to 120 stamps per tray; the bottom of the tray held an ink pad. The manufacturer replaced these plastic price markers by all-in-one metal stampers, on which the price could be changed. Later, employees used plastic pricing guns that affixed price labels. National Archives



1956: MAXWELL Air Force Base, Alabama. This store opened during World War II in a converted warehouse built in 1931. This photo was taken after the store underwent renovation. The store had 11,000 square feet, seven hundred line items, eleven checkouts, and its aisles were 6 feet wide. All were perceived as generous at the time. The store underwent several more renovations before being replaced by a new facility in 1985. DeCA historical file

information on commissaries and exchanges after five years of publishing separate magazines for each type of store. *The Cooperator* had been the commissary publication.

JAN. 6, 1954

A SERIES of unpublished papers compiled by the Office of the Quartermaster General stated: "The privilege of purchasing in commissary stores at cost (wholesale) price is considered a part of military pay. ... To attract and retain qualified career personnel it is considered essential that families quartered on military installations be provided the same facilities and convenience afforded by an average American community. ... a commissary store is a necessity at small isolated military installations such as Deseret Chemical Depot, Utah, which is nineteen miles from the nearest commercial facilities, because the number of families quartered on the installation are insufficient to support a post exchange or commercial grocery store."

The same paper reiterated that while the quartermaster general exercised technical supervision over Army commissary sales stores, major overseas commanders were responsible for all units, activities, and installations under their command, including commissary sales stores. (*OQMG*, 6 Jan 1954, "Traditions or customs of the Army pertaining to commissary stores," p. 5; "Responsibilities at Each Echelon," p. 2; QM Papers, DeCA historical file)

JAN. 6, 1954

THE ARMY had 88 commissaries located in the

Continental United States, and another 128 located overseas. Included in the overseas total were three stores in Alaska and another three in Hawaii. (OQMG, 6 Jan 1954, "Army Commissary Stores," pp. 1-2)

The primary commissary mission was defined as providing subsistence supplies and rations to Army components, especially garrisons, hospitals, troop trains, and motor convoys. The secondary mission was operating a commissary sales store, when specifically authorized. Commissaries were to sell subsistence articles and household articles to authorized individuals. The issue and sales missions of a commissary were combined; all accounting procedures were maintained in a combined operation. Prices were established monthly for centrally procured articles by the Quartermaster Market Center system. A surcharge of 5 percent was added to sales in the United States, 4 percent overseas. (OQMG, 6 Jan 1954, "Brief Description of Accounting System Prescribed for Commissaries," p. 1)

JAN. 21, 1954

Military Technology: The Navy launched USS Nautilus, the first nuclear-powered submarine.

1955

A COMMISSARY store division was established at the Navy Ship's Store Office (NSSO) headquarters. Navy Cmdr. Judd Greene was the first division director. (Navy Commissary Program, p. 3)

1955

Supermarket History: Supermarkets were responsible for 60 percent of American grocery sales.

JANUARY 1955

SOME MILITARY leaders suggested that the commissary surcharge—now down to 3 percent in CONUS and 3.5 percent overseas—should be eliminated. Simultaneously, there was speculation that the unpopular "restrictive commissary rider" contained in every appropriations bill might also be eliminated. This was the rider specifying that commissaries would only be permitted in any given location when the secretary of defense certified that "items normally procured from commissary stores are not otherwise available at a reasonable distance and a reasonable price in satisfactory quality and quantity." (Military Market, Jan 1955, p. 4)

JANUARY 1955

THERE WERE 438 commissaries worldwide; of these, 226 were in the continental United States, 133 in Europe, and 51 in the Far East and the Pacific, including Alaska. The Air Force operated



LATE 1950s: LOWRY Air Force Base, Colorado, This makeshift store was placed inside an old warehouse. The store operated until it was replaced by a larger facility in 1972. For a look at the later store, see page 272. DeCA historical file

> 99 within the United States, 13 of which were "marginal" stores that could close in the near future. Four new stores were planned for Grenier, New Hampshire; Lincoln, Nebraska; Paine Air Force Base, Washington; and Dover, Delaware. (Military Market, Jan 1955, p. 4)

JANUARY 1955

Supermarket Technology: Some commissaries were using moving belts at checkout counters. These devices were among the first checkout conveyor belts. (Military Market, Jan 1955, p. 14)

FEBRUARY 1955

Supermarket Technology: Military Market predicted, "Closing commissary stores for inventory on the last day of the month will be a thing of the past one of these days." The reason for this optimism was a new accounting system, already in place at two Air Force bases. It used IBM computers, keypunch machines, and advance-prepared lists, all of which shortened and improved inventory. Other items discussed in trade magazines included double doors for entry and exit, lighting, display techniques, and stock rotation. (Military Market, Feb 1955, pp. 18-19, 33)

FEBRUARY 1955

THE NAVY had thirty-three commissary stores and six branch stores in the United States. In 1954, one had closed: the store at the Brooklyn, New York, Navy Yard, which had closed "due to pressure from retail groups." (Military Market, Feb. 1955, p. 29)

MARCH 1955

THE STOCK LIST of a civilian grocery chain, published as an example for commissary officers, listed health and beauty aids, paper supplies, household supplies, soft drinks, pet foods, magazines, hosiery, waxes and polishes, cigarettes and tobacco, light bulbs, and brooms. These items were



1956: OBERAMMERGAU, Germany. The customer is using a swept-back, "jet-age" cart similar to larger models being used elsewhere in Germany at Munich and Heidelberg. Note the curtains in the background, a homey touch that disappeared long ago from most military commissaries. *Military Market, Army Times Publications*

slowly becoming available in commissaries as well. (Military Market, Mar 1955, p. 29)

APRIL 1, 1955

AIR FORCE commissaries in Germany switched from a credit basis to a cash-and-carry policy to cut down on overhead generated by accounting. Army stores still allowed customers to use credit accounts. (Military Market, Feb 1955, p. 7)

APRIL 1955

"CARRY-ALL BOYS" working at the commissary at Clark Air Base, Philippine Islands, were volunteers who worked for tips only. A few photographs taken in earlier years show baggers, but the method of their compensation is not well-documented. (Military Market, Apr 1955, p. OS-6)

MAY 15, 1955

THE REVIVED Hoover Commission, headed by former President Herbert Hoover, submitted its Report on Business Enterprises to Congress. The report included sections on the military commissaries and exchanges, and said in both cases that "consideration be given to contracting out the operation of the stores." The commission also said that prices in the stores should be made adequate to cover all the costs, and that commissaries and exchanges should be located only "where adequate or reasonably convenient services are not available." (Military Market, Jun 1955, pp. 20-24, 29, 58)

JUNE 1955

NAVY CMDR. H. C. Thiele replaced Capt. A. T. Magnell as commanding officer of the Navy Ship's Store Office. Thiele served in an interim capacity until August. (Navy Commissary Program)

JUNE 1955

THE DEPARTMENT of Defense operated 438 commissary stores with total 1954 sales of \$306 million. Of these, 199 were in the United States and 239 were overseas. The total number of employees, worldwide, was 12,861. Of these, 5,851 were military. The totals exceeded earlier figures because they included annexes and several other locations not previously listed. There were forty stores in Japan alone, where the Army and Air Force had 444 servicemen working alongside 2,138 Japanese nationals. (Military Market, Jun 1955, p. 27)

JULY 1955

THE SECOND Hoover Commission recommended that a separate agency, managed entirely by civilians, be created within the Defense Department to administer the military's common supply and service activities. The single-manager concept was a significant advance toward integrated supply management within DoD. Under this concept, the management of food and clothing, including food for commissaries, became an Army responsibility. (Lt. Gen. A. T. McNamara, *The Defense Supply Agency*, 12 Dec 1961, p. 2; DLA Web Page, Dec 2003)

JULY 1955

THE 225 AIR FORCE stores were under the direction of the commissary section, Air Force services division, Headquarters Air Materiel Command. (*Military Market*, Oct 1955, pp. 28)

JULY 1955

AIR FORCE commissaries were authorized to stock and sell brooms and mops made by the blind. Local purchases were approved for stores in the United States. Overseas supplies would come through the normal supply channels. (Military Market, Jul 1955, p. 39)

JULY 1, 1955

THE COMMISSARY division, Air Force Stock Fund, began operations. This division was to pay for all items kept by a commissary for sale to authorized individuals and organizations. It was allocated \$10 million, and was to capitalize existing subsistence inventories. (Ltr., W. Cecil Hill to Commander, Air Materiel Command [attn: Comptroller], 30 Jun 1955, Subj.: Allocation of Cash and Funds, Commissary Division, Air Force Stock Fund.)

JULY 1, 1955

THE RESTRICTIVE rider on commissary funding and operation was not included in the budget for fiscal 1956. However, the surcharge was not eliminated, despite the Defense Department's efforts to the contrary. (*Military Market*, Mar 1955, p. 31, & Aug 1955, p. 47)

AUGUST 1955

AIR FORCE Secretary Harold E. Talbott, speaking at graduation exercises at the Air War College and the Air Command and Staff Colleges, opposed the Hoover Commission report's conclusions that exchanges and commissaries should be cut back or completely ended. He also said that the commission's recommendations were "in error" and had "an adverse effect on the morale of the armed forces," so the Air Force would oppose their implementation. Instead, Talbott said, the exchange and commissary services "should be extended and their prices reduced." (Military Market, Aug 1955, p. 29)

AUGUST 1955

NAVY CAPT. J. G. O'Handley became commanding officer of the Navy Ship's Store Office, replacing Cmdr. H. C. Thiele. (Navy Commissary Program; Military Market, Apr 1955, p. 16)

AUGUST 1955

THE NEW DEFENSE funding act passed for fiscal 1956 required the Department of Defense to get approval from congressional appropriations committees before dropping any military retail activities such as commissaries and exchanges. (Military Market, Sep 1955, p. 52)

NOVEMBER 1955 THE NÜRNBERG [Americanized as Nuremberg] commissary in Germany underwent credit-to-cash changeover. Most other stores soon did the same. (Military Market, Nov 1955, p. OS-8)

NOV. 4, 1955

THE MILITARY Subsistence Supply Agency was inaugurated. It was the first of the single-manager programs. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 135)

1956

1956

THE FIRST Federal Catalog, generated by the Defense Cataloging and Standardization Act, was completed in 1956. (McNamara, Defense Supply Agency, pp. 2, 4)

JANUARY 1956

THE DEFENSE Department rejected Hoover Commission's recommendations on the privatization of commissaries and exchanges. (Military Market, Feb 1956, pp. 6-8, 21-23)

AUG. 10, 1956

ACCORDING TO a statement made at a congressional hearing nearly twenty years later, it was only at this time that the Air Force was officially allowed to sell commissary goods. The individual making the statement apparently meant that there was no Air Force Commissary Division or stock fund prior to fiscal 1956. In reality, there were

plenty of Air Force commissary sales stores. But before 1955 they were run and funded by the commands and individual bases, and supported by the Army Quartermaster. [see entry for July 1, 1955.] (10 Aug 1956, c. 1041, 70A, Stat. 579; US Code Title 10, Chapter 939, Section 9621; Congressional Hearings, House Armed Services Committee, 8 May 1975, p. 236)

NOVEMBER 1956 AT NAVAL BASE Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the commissary was permanently replaced with a new facility. The original store, destroyed by fire in June 1950, had been replaced by a temporary store in a converted medical stores warehouse.

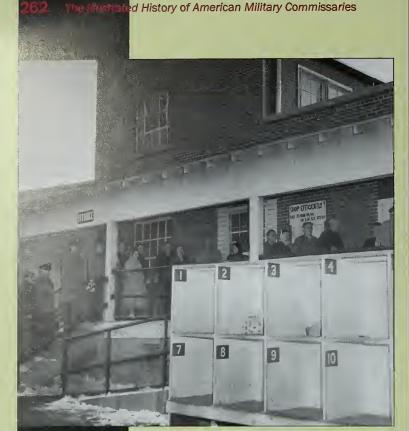
> The new store had parcel boys for carryouts, sixteen checkout lanes, three thousand line items, 450 parking spaces, and air conditioning. Its new checkout system, in which a customer took the cashier's tape to a central paying station, proved tedious and was never adopted elsewhere. (Military Market, Nov 1956)

LATE 1956

ESTABLISHMENT of the Military Subsistence Supply Agency (MSSA): The agency was responsible for the purchase, inspection, storage, and distribution of almost all food items required by all services. Installations were responsible for purchas-



1956: CHERRY POINT. North Carolina. The attention to the work at hand is evident in this worker's expression. A sign of changing sanitation standards: Meat department workers today would be wearing latex gloves. DeCA historical file, courtesy Cherry Point commissary



1957: FORT HAMILTON, New York. Customers line up to shop in the commissary. The boxes at right were used for a drive-up service. In good weather, customers' purchases would be placed in a box; the patrons would drive up and present their receipt and box number (received at the register) to the attendant, who would load the goods into the car. Fort Hamilton photo, DeCA historical file

> ing their milk, bread, and brand-name resale items. (Quartermaster Review, Nov-Dec 1958, p. 8)

> > 1357

1957

A DEFENSE Department advisory committee on professional and technical compensation recommended continuing commissaries and other benefits for the military. It held that making commissaries self-supporting would diminish the benefit because it would mean "unrealistically high costs" for patrons. (Hearings, House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Investigations, 8 May 1975, p. 242)

FEBRUARY 1957

AN EDITORIAL in Military Market opposed combining commissaries with exchanges. This is one of the earliest mentions of the subject. (Military Market, Feb 1957)

MARCH -**APRIL 1957**

COMMISSARIES were having trouble attracting and retaining cashiers due to the position's low grade and low pay. (The Quartermaster Review, Mar-Apr 1957, p, 66)

MARCH -**APRIL 1957** AN ARTICLE in Quartermaster Review mentioned that most commissary store officers had little or no knowledge about meat cutting, so they let the head meat cutter run the meat department. The Army lacked a standard cutting method, every meat cutter had different training, used different methods, and had different names for similar cuts. (Quartermaster Review, Mar-Apr 1957, pp. 10-11)

JULY -**AUGUST 1957**

QUARTERMASTER Review referred to baggers or carry-outs as "tip boys," and gave the opinion that the boys were licensees, not store employees. (Quartermaster Review, Jul-Aug 1957, p. 65)

SEPTEMBER 1957 NAVY CMDR. R. W. Sauer replaced Capt. J. G. O'Handley as commanding officer of NSSO. (Navy Commissary Program)

OCT. 4, 1957

Technology: The Soviet Union launched Sputnik I, the first man-made satellite, thus terrifying Americans into believing they were technologically behind the Soviets. This prompted reforms in education in the United States, particularly in the sciences, and spawned such innovations as the "new math." It also began the space race, which would not end until the U.S. landed on the moon in 1969.

DEC. 2, 1957

THE ARMY'S Office of the Quartermaster General shifted its subsistence division's commissary branch to the newly established Army Subsistence Center in Chicago. The center was the forerunner of the Army Troop Support Agency and would eventually run most of the Army commissaries. The center was assigned to the assistant quartermaster general for operations, so the responsibility for commissary policy stayed with the quartermaster general. (Fisch Letter, 1986;



1960: HILL Air Force Base, Utah. This store consisted of two old warehouses and a smaller building specifically constructed to link them. The store entrance was protected by an awning of a type commonly used for shading front porches on private homes. Within eight years, this open porch had been enclosed to ward off the elements. Photo courtesy Ogden Air Logistics Center Office of History

Hucles, Haversack, p. 135; QMR, Jan-Feb 1958, pp. 4-7, 66; U.S. Army Troop Support Agency Organization and Functions [Draft], Oct 1972, p. v)

1958

AUGUST 1958

THE ARMY began planning branch commissaries for several large posts to relieve crowded conditions in the main stores. The branches would be fitted with a minimum of equipment and would stock only about twenty high-demand items such as bread, milk, and cigarettes. (Quartermaster Review, Jul-Aug 1958, p. 73)

SEPTEMBER -**OCTOBER 1958**

THE OFFICE of the Quartermaster General decided that book matches bearing advertising on the cover could be sold in commissaries

because the books were sold in boxes without ads. The logic was that the advertising would help lower the matchbooks' prices. (Quartermaster Review, Sep-Nov 1958, p. 72)

DEC. 1, 1958

THE U.S. ARMY Subsistence Center became a major subordinate command of the quartermaster general, attached to the Chicago Administration Center for support services. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 135; U.S. Army Troop Support Agency Organization and Functions [Draft], Oct 1972, pp. v-vi)

1959

1959

IN A SPEECH to the Senate, Sen. Paul Douglas (D-Illinois) claimed the commissaries' "original legislation was meant to provide stores where adequate commercial facilities were not available," and that commissaries had become a "grossly overdone" practice. He also said that (1) "a full combat division is being lost by this misuse of military personnel," and that (2) the commissaries were "perhaps the most glaring example of an area where the government competes with private enterprise. ... Let me make it clear that I do not believe in the socialization of grocery stores—and military socialism is still socialism." (Military Market, Oct 1959, pp. 115-26)

LaMonte F. Davis, Military Market's editor, noted, "No merchant ever complains because a





1958: ETHAN ALLEN Air Force Base. Vermont. This store served six hundred families in its heyday, before the base closed in 1960. Military Market, Army Times Publications

base—and its commissary—is being set up in his town, because he knows it will bring many more dollars in his cash registers. Talk about moving a base away from his town and then the merchants and their congressmen—really scream. ... Headline-seeking attacks [on commissaries] should contain all the facts. Then the American taxpayers who foot the bills will have the complete picture."

Military Technology: The Navy launched the

JUNE 9, 1959



BASEBALL HALL-OF-FAMER

Joe DiMaggio (center) is surrounded by store personnel and the Ladies' Selection Panel at Athens, Greece, 1962. DiMaggio was a vice president of a distribution company that did extensive business with commissaries and exchanges. Like sports stars of later days, he teamed with industry to promote certain product lines at military bases.

Military Market, Army Times Publications

AUGUST 1959

NAVY EXCHANGE Review replaced the Monthly NSSO Letter for Navy stores. The publication lasted until January 1964. (NRS News Digest, Apr 1986, p. 12)

USS George Washington, the first U.S. ballistic

missile submarine.

1960

JULY 1, 1960

THE REVISION of Chapter 34, Volume IV of Bureau of Supplies and Accounts Manual limited the Department S-1 line items authorized for Navy commissary stores to 1,850. This did not include issue items. The purpose of the limitation was to "reduce the workload and personnel requirements in an effort to meet existing and anticipated staffing limitations ... [that were] necessary for the Navy to operate within the established budget." (Commissary Store *Courier*, May 1960, p. 1)

AUGUST 1960

NAVY CAPT. J. J. Appleby replaced Capt. R. W. Sauer as commanding officer of NSSO. (Navy Commissary Program)

1961

JANUARY 1961

ROBERT S. McNAMARA became secretary of defense. By this time, the single managers were



1963: FORT KNOX, Kentucky, annex. Commissary annex No. 2 may have been a humble cinder block structure, but it served fifteen hundred customers per day. Military Market, Army Times Publications

JANUARY 1961

AT NAVAL Housing Area (NHA) Yokosuka commissary and the local Navy exchange operated a fifteen-thousand-bird chicken ranch to supply fresh poultry and eggs. It also provided frozen foods from the states, and local fresh vegetables. It had its own bakery to provide doughnuts, rolls, cupcakes, and more. (Military Market, Jan 1961 p. 28)

handling roughly thirty-nine thousand items.

(Defense Logistics Agency Web Page, Dec 2003)

MARCH 1961

McNAMARA, convinced that military supply problems required an arrangement to "manage the managers," convened a panel of defense officials to study plans for improving DOD-wide organization for integrated supply management. (Defense Logistics Agency Web Page, Dec 2003)

APRIL 1961

Technology & the Cold War: Soviet Yuri Gagarin became first man in space.

APRIL 4, 1961

U.S. ARMY Subsistence Center produced Army Regulation 31-200, "Army Commissary Operating Procedures," by combining thirty-two directives. This regulation became the "bible" of Army commissary officers. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 135)

JULY 1961

THE SERVICES' commissary headquarters were located at the following: the Army in the Army Subsistence Center, Chicago, Illinois; the Navy in the Navy Ship's Store Office, Brooklyn, New York; the Marine Corps in headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Arlington Annex, Arlington, Virginia; and the Air Force in the Marietta Air Materiel Area, Dobbins Air Force Base, Marietta, Georgia.

AUG. 17, 1961

International Politics/Cold War: Construction began on the Berlin Wall in East Germany, separating East Berlin from West Berlin.

AUG. 31, 1961

THE QUARTERMASTER Association changed its name to the Defense Supply Association (DSA). (Military Market, Aug 1961, p. 9; Hucles, Haversack, pp. 107, 135)

OCT. 1, 1961

LT. GEN. Andrew T. McNamara was selected to command the new Defense Supply Agency (DSA). He immediately began assembling personnel to get the agency started by January 1. (McNamara, Defense Supply Agency, pp. 4-7)

1962

1962

Retail History/Economics: The birth of discount retailing. This was the first year for Kmart, Target, and Wal-Mart.

1962

RESALE ITEM Selection Boards in CONUS, the Pacific, and in Europe met quarterly to select those items that commissaries in their respective areas of the world would carry. The boards' work was intensive and difficult; they had to keep the stock list below two thousand items, while also trying to please a variety of local preferences. (Military Market, Jul 1962)

JANUARY 1962

THE HEADQUARTERS for the Air Force's commissary operations were temporarily located at Middletown Air Materiel Area, Olmsted Air Force Base, Pennsylvania.

JAN. 1, 1962

THE DEFENSE Supply Agency (DSA) in Washington, D.C., assumed numerous responsibilities of the Quartermaster Corps. Predecessor to the Defense Logistics Agency, it would serve as a common supply agency for all the armed services. (McNamara, Defense Supply Agency, pp. 4-7; Defense Logistics Agency Web Page, Dec 2003)

Later that year it moved to Cameron Station, in Alexandria, Virginia. DSA's primary mission was to provide supply support, contract administration services, and technical and logistic services on items procured by the military, from major weapons systems to food supplies. It purchased items used by all the services, including fuel, clothing, medical supplies, repair and maintenance items, and subsistence.

Officials estimated that the consolidation of these functions under DSA and subsequent unified operations would allow them to reduce the workforce by thirty-three hundred people and save more than \$30 million each year. (Defense Logistics Agency Web Page, Dec. 2003)

The agency would take control of eight single-



1963: CAPE MAY, New Jersey. The store at this Coast Guard Recruiting Station was a combination commissary, exchange, and snack bar. From left: Lt. (j.g.) William J. Irrig, exchange officer; John Accardi, commissary store supervisor; and Ralph E. Risley, feature editor, Military Market magazine.

Military Market, Army Times Publications



1960: NIAGARA FALLS, New York. From 1957 to 1970, a commissary operated at Niagara Falls Air Force Base, located on the Niagara Falls Municipal Airport. The store seems to have been wellstocked. Most of these brands and products are still recognizable to shoppers nearly fifty years later. Military Market, Army Times Publications

> manager operating agencies: the Defense Clothing & Textile Supply Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; the Defense Construction Supply Center, Columbus, Ohio; the Defense General Supply Center, Richmond, Virginia; the Defense Medical

Supply Center, Brooklyn, New York; the Defense Petroleum Supply Center, Washington, D.C.; the Defense Subsistence Supply Center, Chicago, Illinois; the Defense Traffic Management Service, Washington, D.C.; and the Defense Logistics Services Center, Washington, D.C. It later added

1965: MARE ISLAND, California. This view of the meatcutting room at Naval Station Mare Island shows sawdust on the floor, the traditional way of absorbing blood from the carcasses, providing traction, and making cleanup and sanitation easier. DeCA historical file



1963: SENECA DEPOT, New York. At this small store, cashier Ted Gillen is shown placing the customer's items in a box rather than a paper sack. At many stores, customers were expected to bring their own boxes to help the stores cut costs. *DeCA historical file*

another four agencies. (McNamara, *Defense Supply Agency*, pp. 4-7)

FEB. 20, 1962

Technology: Marine Corps Lt. Col. John Glenn became the first American to orbit the earth.

MARCH 1962

SKILCRAFT and other products made by the blind became available for sale in Europe. (*Military Market*, Mar 1962, p. 50)

JULY 6, 1962

GENERAL ORDER No. 47 made the U.S. Army Subsistence Center in Chicago an activity of the Chief of Support Services with primary responsibility for Army commissaries. (Hucles, *Haversack*, pp. 107, 136)

SEPTEMBER 1962 MURRY H. Greenwald published the first issue of Exchange and Commissary News.. Popularly known as E & C News, it became the second major, long-lived commercial enterprise publications dealing exclusively with the military retail business. It would outlive Military Market, the Army Times publication that had replaced The Cooperator, the first military resale magazine. (Murry H. Greenwald, telephone conversation with Dr. Peter D. Skirbunt, 30 Jun 2000)

OCT. 14-28, 1962

U.S. History/International Politics/Cold War:

Cuban Missile Crisis. America and the Soviet Union came to the brink of nuclear war over Soviet medium-range and intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Cuba. Eventually, negotiations between the two countries resulted in the removal of the missiles, averting a U.S. invasion of Cuba.

1963

FEBRUARY 1963

COL. ELWOOD D. McSherry, commanding officer, Army Subsistence Center, Chicago, defined the 1963 commissary mission: "Commissary stores ... contribute significantly to the high state of morale existing within our armed forces. The commissary benefit is an integral part of soldier pay and is considered a part of the total remuneration and consideration afforded by a military career." (Military Market Buyers Guide, Feb 1963, p. 88)

APRIL 22, 1963

EXCESS SURCHARGE funds were authorized for commissary improvements. The Air Force surcharge rate was reduced from 3 percent stateside and 2.5 percent overseas to a flat 2 percent everywhere. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 136; *Military Market*, Apr 1963, p. 7)

JUNE 1963

THE DEFENSE Supply Agency was managing

over one million different items in nine supply centers with an estimated inventory of \$2.5 billion.

(Defense Logistics Agency Web Page, Dec 2003)

JUNE 30, 1963

THERE WERE 477 commissary stores. Of these, 269 were in the lower forty-eight United States, using 2,927 officers and enlisted, and 8,084 civilian employees. There were also 15 commissaries in Alaska and Hawaii, and 193 in other overseas locations. (Comptroller General's Report, Apr 1964, pp. 2, 37)

JULY 1963

JOINT CONGRESSIONAL Economic Committee recommended a review of the criteria established by the secretary of defense for authorizing military commissary stores in the United States. (Comptroller General's Report, Apr 1964)

NOV. 22, 1963

U.S. History: President John F. Kennedy was shot and killed in Dallas. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as president.

1964

1964

Consumer Health: The surgeon general's warning first appeared on packs of cigarettes.

JANUARY 1964

NAVY EXCHANGE Review ceased publication. It was replaced by Navy Exchange and Commissary Store News Digest until April 1966. (Navy Resale System (NRS) News Digest, Apr 1986, p. 12)

APRIL 1964

THERE WERE 289 commissaries operating in the continental United States. This figure, an increase of twenty compared to the previous year, apparently counted annexes separately. (Comptroller General's Report, Apr 1964, p. 24)

APRIL 16, 1964

PUBLICATION of Comptroller General's

(GAO) report to the Congressional Joint Economic Committee, 'Failure to Curtail Government Expense of Military Commissary Stores Continental United States Where Adequate Commercial Facilities are Available."

This report stated that the statute of August 1, 1953, designed to limit the number of commissary stores in the continental U.S., was being negated by the criteria established by the Department of Defense in justifying the existence of these stores.

In compiling the report, the



GAO visited the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the military department headquarters, and only eight commissary stores, all of which were in the vicinity of Washington, D.C. This led the GAO to the inaccurate assumption that D.C.area stores were typical of all stores in appearance, operations, and clientele.

The report recognized the commissaries had been justified as a "fringe benefit" that "has become, as a practical matter, a part of the pay structure for military personnel ... the curtailment of the fringe benefit would represent a reduction in remuneration and would adversely affect the morale of military personnel."

But the GAO believed the criteria by which "adequate commercial facilities" were judged by the departments were unreasonable. The report recommended that until Congress acted to clarify its position on commissaries, the annual certification survey (required by the 1953 Appropriations Act) be omitted, saving the annual \$100,000 expense needed to conduct the survey. (Comptroller General's Report, Apr 1964; see esp. pp. 7-23)



EARLY 1960s: SAN DIEGO, California. This facility at Naval Base San Diego, built from several old structures, was spacious and well-maintained. It served its purpose well-for perhaps as long as fifty years-and was not replaced by a new store until 1989. Courtesy San Diego commissary, DeCA historical file

iniy **1**964

CAPT. J. J. Appleby of Navy Ship's Store Office was promoted to rear admiral. (*Navy Commissary Program*)

2. 1964

U.S. Military History: Gulf of Tonkin Incident. Two U.S. destroyers were reportedly attacked by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. (The traditional spellings, Viet-Nam or Viet Nam, are sacrificed here for the modern spelling, Vietnam, which came to be used by Americans late in the war.)

AUG. 7, 1964

Military & Political History: Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. This measure gave President Lyndon B. Johnson the power to directly involve U.S. forces in the Vietnam conflict.

AUG. 7, 1964 -MARCH 29, 1973 **U.S. TROOPS** were engaged in combat operations during the **Vietnam War.**

During the war, the military wanted to provide more than forty-five hundred calories to each man per day. Ninety percent of all meals served to U.S. servicemen were served hot. The MCI (meal, combat, individual) was the more nutritionally balanced and filling descendant of the C-ration.

With no U.S. family members in-country, exchanges were the rule in Vietnam. One commissary did exist in Saigon and would be run first by the Army and then by the Navy. A branch store was located at Long Binh. (Staff Sgt. Randy Goins, "A History of Army Rations," in *Troop Support Digest*, Winter 1986, p. 35)

1965

FEBRUARY 1965

U.S. Military History: The first U.S. Marine Corps combat units went ashore in Vietnam.

FEBRUARY 1965

THE SAIGON commissary became a Navy-run facility. (Your Navy Exchange: 50 Years of Serving You. NEXCOM 50th Anniversary Commemorative Publication, p. 17)

APRIL 1965

REAR ADM. C. A. Blick replaced Rear Adm. J.
J. Appleby as commanding officer of the Navy
Ship's Store Office. (Navy Commissary

APRIL 28, 1965

U.S. Military History: U.S. military intervention in the Dominican Republic was prompted by a civil war.

Program)

JUNE 1965

UNIFORMED commissary officers oversaw all Navy commissary operations. (*Military Market*, Jun 1965, p. 98)

JULY 1, 1965

THE DEFENSE Personnel Support Center (DPSC) in Philadelphia became operational. It merged the Defense Supply Agency's Defense Subsistence Supply Center (DSSC), Defense Clothing and Textile Supply Center (DCTSC), and Defense Medical Supply Center (DMSC). It was jointly staffed by the services. DPSC was responsible for buying, inspecting, storing, and distributing food supplies for worldwide consumption by the armed services and other authorized government organizations. It was the chief link between the military and the American food industry. (1974 Military Market Facts, p. 136; Hucles, Haversack, pp. 108, 136)

JULY 10, 1965

U.S. ARMY Subsistence Center was redesignated the U.S. Army Food Service Center. The name change was effective January 1, 1966. It would remain in Chicago for six years, after which it moved to Fort Lee, Virginia. (Fisch letter, 1986; Hucles, *Haversack*, pp. 108, 136)

JULY 1965

WIDOWS OF reserve members of all services would now have commissary privileges regardless of how long their husbands had been on active duty, according to a Defense Department memo. Before, members had to be on active duty at least seventy-two hours before their death for their families to receive privileges. (Military Market, Jul 1965, p. 29)

JULY 1965

THERE WERE 492 commissaries operating worldwide; of these, 315 were in the continental United States. (*Military Market Facts, 1966-1967*)

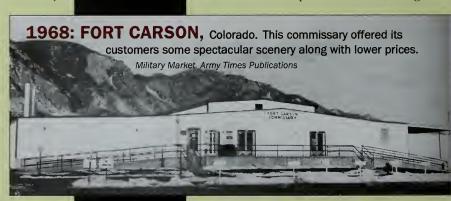
1966

1966

Military Humor/Food Products: Former President Dwight D. Eisenhower wrote to the chairman of the board of the Hormel company, "officially pardoning" him for shipping Spam to the Army during World War II. (Paul Dickson, Chon: A Cook's Tour of Military Food, pp. 60-61)

1966

THOUSANDS of portable walk-in, refrigerated



storage boxes filled with perishable beef, eggs, fresh fruits and vegetables began arriving in Vietnam. This was considered a "logistics miracle." (Defense Logistics Agency Web Page, Dec 2003)

JAN. 1, 1966

THE NAME change of the Army Subsistence Center to the Army Food Service Center became official. (Hucles, *Haversack*, pp. 108-11)

MAY 1, 1966

NAVY RESALE System News Digest began monthly publication, replacing Navy Exchange and Commissary Store News Digest. (Navy Resale System NRS/ News Digest, Apr 1986, p. 12)

1967

1967

THE NAVY Resale System assumed direct command of the Navy commissary stores in order to provide strong centralized management. (Navy Resale System Annual Review, 1985; Navy Resale System, p. 2; NRS News Digest, Apr 1976, p. 6)

1967

NAVY COMMISSARIES were authorized to stock 2,275 grocery department items (not including troop issue) but most stores did not have enough room. (*Navy Commissary Program*, p. 4)

1967

THE COMMISSARY at Naval Air Station Alameda, California, was used for a scene in the Hollywood film "Yours, Mine, and Ours" about a Navy family with eighteen children. The film starred Lucille Ball, Henry Fonda, and Van Johnson. (Military Market, Oct 1967, p. 32)

JULY 1967

THE SERVICES' commissary headquarters were located at the following: the Army Food Service Center, Chicago, Illinois; the headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, Arlington Annex, Arlington, Virginia; the Navy Ship's Store Office, Brooklyn, New York; and the Air Force at the Marietta Air Materiel Area, Dobbins Air Force Base, Georgia. (Military Market, Jul 1967, p. 236)

AUGUST 1967

ORDERS FROM the Naval Housing Area Yokosuka, Japan, commissary went through Oakland and took three months to arrive. (Military Market, Aug 1967, p. 106)

NOV. 1, 1967

A STUDY on military compensation headed by Rear Adm. L. E. Hubbell (the "Hubbell Study") recommended commissary stores become self-supporting. (Logistics Management Institute, Department of Defense Commissary Stores. LMI Study 69-4, p. 26)





1967: QUONSET POINT, Rhode Island. By 1967, most commissary grocery sections had been self-service for years. Four decades later, however, many stores' deli, meat, poultry and bakery operations remain full-service. The Quonset Point store operated from 1948 until 1974. Military Market, Army Times Publications

1968

1968

THE ARMED Forces Recipe Service was created. (Goins, *Army Rations*, p. 35)

1968

A DoD STUDY said that customers disliked the brand, quality, and prices of items in Army and Air Force commissaries in Europe. (House Armed Services Committee study No. 91-77, 12400)

1968

FISCAL 1968 total commissary sales were nearly \$1.5 billion. Of that total, \$100 million was invested in inventories. Nearly twenty thousand people worldwide were employed by commissaries. (Logistics Management Institute, *Department of Defense Commissary Stores*, LMI Study 69-4, p. 1)

JANUARY -FEBRUARY 1968 **U.S.** *Military History:* Tet Offensive. This was considered the turning point of the Vietnam War.

d History of American Military Commissaries

MARCH 1968

THE PHILIP A. Connelly Awards Program was established to recognize excellence in Army food service. The awards were named for the late P. A. Connelly, past international president of the International Food Service Executives Association. (*Troop Support Digest*, Winter 1981, p. 24)

APRIL 4, 1968

U.S. History: Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was shot and killed in Memphis, Tennessee.

JUNE 5, 1968

U.S. History: Sen. (and front-running presidential candidate) **Robert F. Kennedy** was **shot and killed** in Los Angeles, California.

AUGUST 1968

CAPT. J. E. Morrissey became interim commanding officer of NSSO, replacing Rear Adm. C. A. Blick. (Navy Commissary Program)

AUTUMN 1968

NAVY SHIP'S Store Advisory Committee, which had replaced the Bingham Committee, recommended that the name of the Navy Ship's Store Office be changed, since the existing title did not accurately reflect the assigned mission. (Navy Commissary Program, p. 4)

OCTOBER 1968

THE FIRST issue of U.S. Army's *Food Program* Digest was published.

OCTOBER 1968

REAR ADM. D. H. Lyness replaced Capt. J. E. Morrissey as commanding officer of NSSO. (Navy Commissary Program)

1969

1969

BECAUSE OF alleged abuses in the commissary system, an investigation was conducted by Gen. William W. Momyer, Office of Special Investigations (OSI). The findings: Most abuses were attributed to insufficient attention to regulations. (Momyer papers, DeCA historical files)

1969

THE AIR FORCE was the first of the services to allow the sale of health and beauty aids products in its commissaries. This action was taken on a test basis. (1974 Military Market Facts, p. 138)

JAN. 1, 1969

IN RESPONSE to the 1968 DoD findings, the European Commissary Resale Item Selection Board (ECRIB) for commissary stores in Germany and Belgium was abolished. Its function was transferred to the Army's Office of the Chief of Support Services in Washington. (House Armed Services Committee Report No. 91-77, p. 12400)



1970: KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany. The "warehouse"-style of displaying goods, as done here, was never as attractive as "visible merchandising." But with shorthanded crews it was often the only way of doing business. Military Market, Army Times Publications



1970: PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii. A shopper looks for the perfect pineapple at Naval Station Pearl Harbor. Considering the store location, she had a good chance of finding it. Surely these were among the freshest pineapples in the world. Military Market, Army Times Publications

JAN. 1, 1969

THE AIR FORCE operated 200 commissary stores (144 located within the United States). The Army operated 148 (73 in the continental United States); the Navy, 92 (65 in CONUS); and the Marines had 11 main stores (one in Hawaii, the rest in CONUS).

MARCH 24, 1969

AN ARTICLE in a national civilian publication said the armed services were running 450 commissaries worldwide, and annually doing \$1.5 billion in business. The surcharge was only meant for "commissary supplies and maintenance. Construction costs come out of general tax revenues. So do wages paid to commissary workers."

The article said, "The average shopper runs up a bill of \$34 each time he visits Cameron Station. Officials say that the same basketful would cost the customer \$50 in a regular supermarket." This statement implies an average savings of 32 percent, which would not again be equaled until 2003. (U.S. News & World Report, 24 Mar 1969, p. 66)



1971: ROTA, Spain. The Navy has run a big store at Naval Base Rota ever since the end of World War II. This one, built in 1957, appeared to be spacious, but was described as "small and cramped" in 1971. Its area was between 5,500 and 8,912 square feet, not including a 14,000-square-foot warehouse. *Military Market, Army Times Publications*

MAY 26, 1969

THE NAVY SHIP'S Store Office was officially redesignated Navy Resale System Office (NRSO, and sometimes, NAVRESO; the acronym NAVRESSO came in 1979). (NRS News Digest, Apr 1976, p. 6; Navy Commissary Program, p. 4)

JUNE 1969

THE LOGISTICS Management Institute published its study on commissary stores for the secretary of defense. It addressed shortcomings in commissaries and pointed out advantages of making the stores self-supporting. Privatization, however, was *not* considered an option. (LMI, entire)

JULY 20, 1969

Technology: U.S. astronauts **Neil Armstrong** and **Buzz Aldrin** made the first manned landing on the Moon.

1970

1970

THE ARMY BEGAN allowing the sale of a large variety of health and beauty aids in its commissaries. Formerly, the Army had only allowed a few basic H&BAs, such as soap and shaving cream. (1974 Military Market Facts, p. 138)

MAY 15, 1970

U.S. Military History: President Richard M. Nixon appointed the first two female generals in U.S. history.

JULY 22, 1970

AIR FORCE Maj. Gen. D. W. Graham, assistant deputy chief of staff, systems and logistics, limited Air Force commissary line items to 2,500 items per store (by AFM 145-1) primarily because of physical space considerations in the stores. (Hearings, HASC No. 91-81, 1970, p. 3984; 1974 Military Market Facts, pp. 137-38)

DEC. 22, 1970

1971

THE PHILBIN Subcommittee released a report calling for closer defense involvement with leadership and control over store operations, more flexible Army finance methods, and better career opportunities for those assigned to the commissary resale function. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 109)

1971

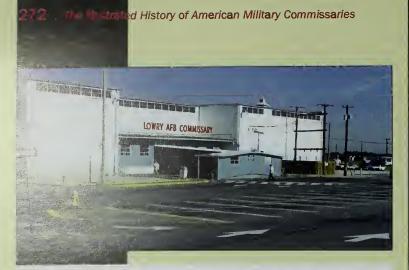
ARMY MESS halls officially became known as dining facilities to boost their image and that of the personnel who ran them. (*Troop Support Digest*,

1968: SAND POINT, Naval Air Station Seattle. Taken on opening day,

this shot demonstrates the immense parking lots inherited by stores built inside hangars; the tarmac formerly used for aircraft parking was able to accommodate hundreds of automobiles. This particular hangar was so large that it eventually housed the Navy exchange alongside the commissary. NRSSO

photo,DeCA historical file





1972: LOWRY Air Force Base, Colorado. The new store that opened at Lowry in 1972 was a tremendous improvement over its predecessor, shown on page 259. It served as the base commissary until the base closed in 1994. DeCA historical file

Winter 1981, p. 24; see Appendix 5, 'Mess')

1971

THE ARMY considered centralized management for its commissaries, whereby all operational decisions would be made at a central headquarters. (Hucles, *Haversack*, pp. 110-11)

FEB. 13, 1971

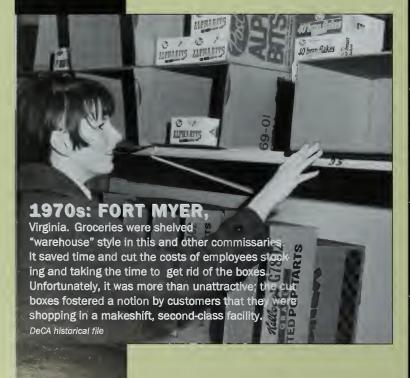
THE ARMY Food Service Center became a field supporting agency, placed under the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics. (Fisch letter, 1986; Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 136)

JUNE 1971

CAPT. A. L. Borchers replaced Rear Adm. D. H. Lyness as commanding officer of the Navy Resale System Office on an interim basis. (Navy Commissary Program)

JULY 1971

REAR ADM. J. G. Schoggen replaced Capt. A. L. Borchers as commanding officer of NRSO. (Navy Commissary Program)



JULY 29 - 1971 MARCH 6, 1972 THE SPECIAL Subcommittee on Recruiting and Retention of Military Personnel (of the House Armed Services Committee) recognized the link between commissaries and retention, and recommended a reorganization of the commissary system. They also urged that savings be passed on to the patron. (*Hearings*, H.R., 8 May 1975, p. 242; *Hearings*, HASC 92-42, 1972 [see esp. 22 Feb 1972, pp. 8848-49])

AUG. 31, 1971

THE ARMY Food Service Center moved to Fort Lee, Virginia. (Fisch letter, 1986; Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 136; Army Movement Directive 71-22 [11 Jun 1971])

OCT. 29, 1971

A NEW Armed Services Commissary Store Regulation was established, superseding the August 1, 1949 regulation.

1972

1972

Supermarket History: Kroger's first "super store" opens in Ohio.

MAY 15, 1972

THE ARMY Subsistence Center and U.S. Army Food Service Center were renamed the U.S. Army Troop Support Agency (TSA). Maj. Gen. John D. McLaughlin was TSA's first commanding officer. (*Troop Support Digest*, Winter 1981, p. 24; Fisch letter, 1986; Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 136)

JUNE 1972

IN PART ONE of a published panel discussion for *Military Market*, a group of five enlisted spouses and two officer spouses agreed that some commissaries were making the redemption of manufacturer's coupons difficult. The group's Navy wives also found it irritating that Navy commissaries did not stock health and beauty aids. (*Military Market*, Jun 1972, p. 68)

JULY 1972

FOLLOWING the Military Market panel discussion mentioned in June, the Navy began allowing the sale of health and beauty aids in its commissaries. (1974 Military Market Facts, p. 138; Navy Commissary Program, p. 4)

AUGUST 1972

THE DEFENSE Supply Association changed its name to the American Logistics Association (ALA). (Military Market, Aug 1972, p. 9)

AUGUST 1972

IN THE second part of an interview with *Military Market*, a group of five enlisted spouses and two officers' spouses unanimously agreed that they

CHAPTE

would not want to see commissary stores closed down in return for some level of cash compensation. (Military Market, Aug 1972, p. 50)

SEPT. 5, 1972

International Terrorism: Eight Palestinian "Black September" terrorists seized eleven Israeli athletes in the Olympic Village in Munich, West Germany during the 1972 Summer Games. Nine of the hostages and five terrorists were later killed during the rescue attempt.

OCTOBER 1972

RECONSIDERING its former position, the Army began to favor the home office concept for its commissaries. Under this model, policymaking for commissaries would be centralized, while command would be retained at installation level. (Hucles, Haversack, pp. 110-11)

1973

1973

THE DEFENSE Supply Agency assumed responsibility of managing food items for troop subsistence and commissary support. (Defense Logistics Agency Web Page, Dec 2003)

1973

TROOP SUPPORT Agency (TSA) headquarters became responsible for supervision of Army commissaries, but allowed operational control to remain with the installations—under the "home office" concept. (Hucles, Haversack, pp. 110-11)

1973

THE NAVY commissary at Mitchel Field, New York, became the first military commissary to get electronic point-of-sale equipment. (Military Market, Oct 1991, p. 114)

JAN. 27, 1973

U.S. Military History: The government announced the end of the military draft. The advent of the all-volunteer force made the commissary benefit important in attracting recruits.

MARCH 1973

MAJ. GEN. Van Lydergraf replaced Maj. Gen. McLaughlin as TSA commander. (U.S. Army Food Program Digest, Apr/May/Jun 1973, p. i)

MARCH 29, 1973

U.S. Military History: The last U.S. combat units left Vietnam. There were reportedly 58,202 American men and women who died in Vietnam during the war, another 304,704 were wounded, and 2,338 classified as missing in action.

MAY 11, 1973

THE MARINES authorized health and beauty aids for sale in Marine commissaries. (1974 Military Market Facts, pp. 137-38)

MAY 18, 1973

A NEW commissary store at the Navy Supply Corps School in Athens, Georgia, had only been in operation two months when a tornado demolished it. (Military Market, Feb 1974, pp. 30, 33)

JULY 1973

BRIG. GEN. J. C. McWhorter replaced Maj. Gen. Van Lydegraf as TSA commander. (Food Program Digest, Jul/Aug/Sep 1973, p. 1)

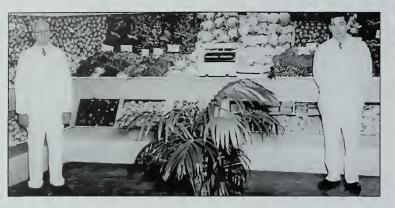
JULY 31, 1973

THE MARINE CORPS banned the sale of cigarettes and tobacco products in Marine commissaries. (1974 Military Market Facts, p. 137)



COMMISSARY Betwee Portfolio: Then and Maw EMPLOYEES

HESE ARE THE PEOPLE who have delivered the commissary benefit, around the world, since 1867. Some are active-duty military and some are spouses, while others are military children. Some are full-time employees and have made the commissary their career; others are part-time or intermittent. Some are local nationals, others are U.S. citizens. They hold quite a variety of jobs, and are often cross-trained to do several in order to cut costs. Whatever their background, they are the most important people in the commissary system, since it is their quality of service to the customers that helps determine the ultimate success or failure of the entire benefit.



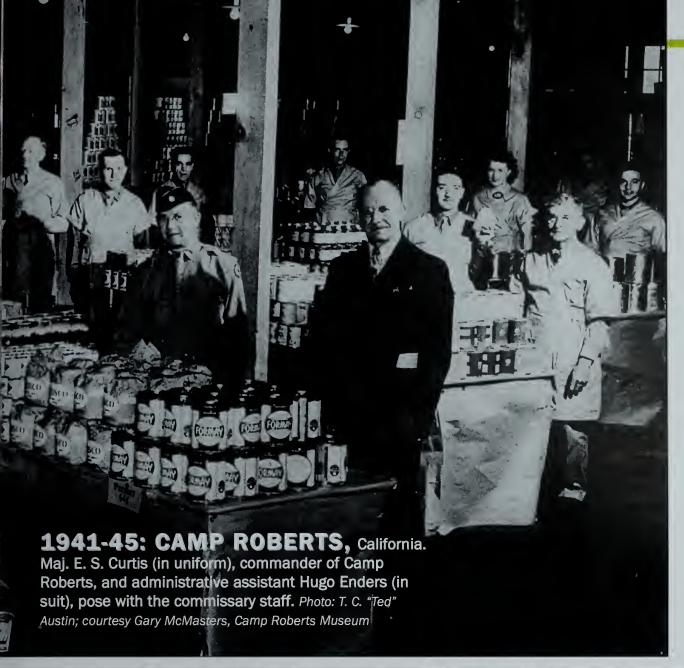
▲ 1943: FORT MYER, Virginia. The white uniforms worn by these two produce-section employees were standard garb for grocery workers at the time. This commissary, which opened in January 1943, boasted folding basket carriers, a large fresh produce section, tile floors, endcaps, and many brand-name products familiar to shoppers today. National Archives



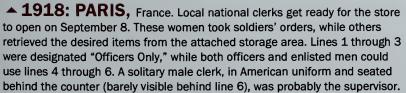


▶ 1920s: NEWPORT,

Rhode Island. The staff of this Navy commissary was exclusively male and military. Times have changed; today's stores are almost entirely civilian, and usually the majority of the staff is female. U.S. Navy photo

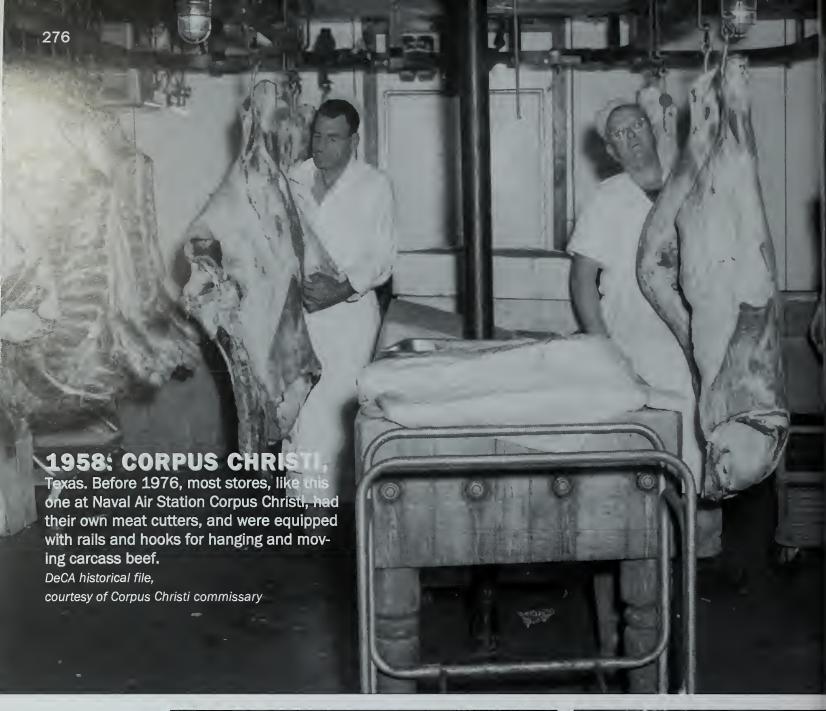








▲ EARLY 1950s: LAJES Air Base, the Azores. Two local national employees show off a new sign in English and Portuguese. Photo courtesy of Lajes commissary





▲ 1964: Norton Air Force Base, California. A cashier and customer, with volunteer "carryout boys" in the background. Photo courtesy of Vic Shuey

▶ 1959: Cherry Point, North Carolina. Two men use metal price markers, with changeable prices, at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point to place prices on each can. These stampers, successors to plastic stamp sets (shown on page 258), remained in use for decades. Military

Market, Army Times Publications





▲ 1965: FORT CARSON, Colorado. A battery of cashiers awaits customers at the grand opening of their new store.

All photos this page: Military Market, Army Times Publications



▲ 1967: JACKSONVILLE, Florida. A sailor unloads breakfast cereal for the Naval Air Station Jacksonville commissary.





▲ 1965: SCOTT Air Force Base, Illinois. Maj. C. H. Anderson, commissary store officer, looks over a brochure on improving store operations.

◆ 1970: FORT HUACHUCA,

Arizona. The commissary store officer (left) and the store's purchasing agent go over new products. Photos: Military Market, Army Times Publications



▶ 1968 McCHORD

Air Force Base, Washington. The front-end staff poses for a photo. The managerial (and controversial) red coats were already being used in an effort to make management more visible and easier for the customers to find.

DeCA historical file courtesy
of McChord Air Force Base commissary



▲ 1975: SENECA Army Depot, New York, 1975. This is a typical meat-cutting room of the time, with its floor covered in sawdust to absorb blood, provide traction, and guard against slipping. On the left, Mike Marchek wraps and prices ground beef; in the center, Larry Walters takes a partial carcass from the freezer using a hook on an overhead track; on the right, Leo Holland hand-cuts steaks on a true butcher's block.

Deca Historical File, courtesy Seneca AD commissary

1968: WIESBADEN, Germany. Workers unload a truck using a rolling conveyor belt. This method, employed for many years, is still used at many locations for either unloading delivery trucks or for moving individual boxes from one location to another inside a store or warehouse. Military Market, Army Times Publications



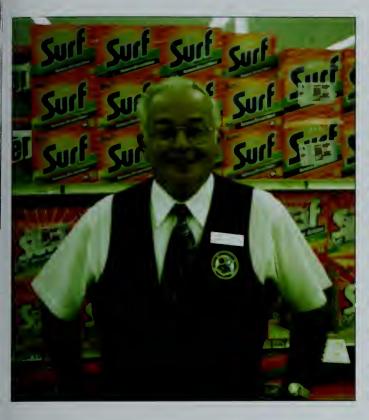




▲ 1985: MARCH Air Force Base, California. Rick Reed and Tech. Sgt. Patricia Capps look for an item in the commissary warehouse. AFCOMS photo, DeCA historical file



▲ 1976: YUMA, Arizona. A cashier at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma takes a customer's payment. Scanning had not yet come to the commissaries. Military Market, Army Times Publications



▲ 1992: EGLIN Air Force Base, Florida. Bobby Stultz, longtime commissary store officer, had been one of the military's most popular and successful CSOs for twenty years. Under his direction, Eglin won "Best Store" honors five times with AFCOMS and once with DeCA. His sudden passing in 1996 was a shock to all who knew him. DeCA photo: Pete Skirbunt



▲ 1997: TAEGU, South Korea. Yi Sun Cha (left) and Yi Hae Suk, two local national deli/bakery contract employees, wear traditional costumes for the new store's grand opening. In 1999 and 2000, the store was named DeCA's Best Small Store overseas. DeCA photo courtesy Taegu commissary



▲ 1999: DOVER Air Force Base, Delaware. Employee Kewly Johns arranges peppers in the commissary's produce department.

DeCA photo: Pete Skirbunt



▲ 1999: FORT MONMOUTH, New Jersey.

Cecelia Farwell, a customer service manager, poses in her store. She won a world class customer service award in 1998.

DeCA photo: Pete Skirbunt.

Cammissary Employees

> 2005: SPANGDAHLEM,

Germany. Al Alferez, director of the Eifel area commissaries-Spangdahlem and Bitburg-talks about the Spangdahlem store to Mary Foglesong, wife of Air Force Gen. Robert Foglesong, commander of U.S. Air Forces Europe. Alferez gave her a short briefing about the store and accompanied her on a tour of the facility.

DeCA photo courtesy of the Spangdahlem commissary





▲ 1998: PORTSMOUTH, Virginia. Yollie Beard, cashier, poses by her register in the store at the Scott Annex of the Norfolk Naval Shipyard.



▲ 2002: FORT BELVOIR, Virginia. Cheryl Conner, store director at the Fort Belvoir commissary. For years, the Belvoir store has been one of the biggest and busiest commissaries in the world. DeCA photo: Pete Skirbunt



DeCA photo: Pete Skirbunt





▲ 2002: KINGSVILLE, Texas. Johnny Sterling, store director, tapes coupons to items at the Naval Air Station Kingsville commissary as an additional service to the customer. DeCA photo: Beth Settle, Midwest Region





"... the citizens of our country think ... that because you're in the military you will accept secondclass status and [still] provide a first-line defense..."

- Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Sam Parish, testifying to Congress about the importance of commissaries.



CENTRALIZATION, MODERNIZATION, 1974 - 1988 AND THE PUSH FOR PRIVATIZATION

HE '60s AND EARLY '70s had been tumultuous years. The nation's divisiveness over the Vietnam War brought about the end of both the American war effort and the military draft. But because there was still a Cold War, there was still a need for a strong deterrent force. The problem was how to raise and maintain credible armed forces in an era when many Americans had become disenchanted with the nation's interventionist policies. The solution, it seemed, was an all-volunteer military.

To maintain a steady stream of volunteers, the military would place more emphasis upon improving its benefit package. As one of those benefits, commissaries were important not only in attracting volunteers, but also in encouraging them to remain in uniform. The stores' new level of importance and respect prompted positive changes and improvements on levels never before attempted.

STATE OF THE COMMISSARIES, 1974

As of 1974, the Department of Defense established basic ground rules for the operation of all commissaries, while each of the respective services continued to run its own commissary system. At the beginning of the fiscal year, there were 418 commissaries worldwide—not including an undetermined number of branch stores and annexes, which were sometimes (but not always) counted as separate stores.

Of these stores, the Army had 127 (68 in the United States); the Navy had 94 (66 stateside); the Air Force 181 (123 stateside); the Marines 13 (12 stateside); and the Coast Guard had three (all in the United States). Most stores ranged in size from 11,000 to 18,000 square feet of sales floor space, but there were a few that were larger and many that were smaller. Stores built after 1970 tended to be larger (about 25,000 to 30,000 square feet). CONUS stores were open 40 to 48 hours per week, while overseas stores averaged around 35 hours per week.

In 1974, few military commissaries were modern stores. Soon, however, the commissaries would be run by modern, centralized organizations, which would eventually turn them into modern retail outlets.

NAVY COMMISSARY OPERATIONS

Centralization was hardly new. The Navy had been professionally running its commissaries as military grocery stores since 1946 under the control of the Navy Ship's

Store Office (NSSO), headquartered in Brooklyn, New York. NSSO had removed the stores from the control of the base commanders and the usual Navy chain of command. In 1969, this office was renamed the Navy Resale Systems Office (NRSO), reflecting its mission of running stores ashore as well as those afloat.

NRSO ran the Navy's exchanges as well as its commissaries. As a result, its attention and resources were divided between both operations, supporting facilities that were frequently placed in adjacent buildings. Sometimes the commissary was of secondary importance with the emphasis being placed upon the exchanges. This was reflected in the command structure: Navy commissary officers or store managers were often civilians, under the direct supervision of the local Navy exchange officers, who were usually men in uniform.

In 1974, the Navy organized 64 of its commissaries in the United States, and 19 of 28 overseas outlets, into geographical complexes. Each complex contained two to eight stores and was run by a commander, who was usually a Navy supply officer. The commander headed the buying board for his complex. This board met monthly to make stock item and buying decisions.

Unlike Army and Air Force stores, Navy commissaries did not receive base level support. They had to pay for certain items of equipment, supplies, and services. Examples included acquisition, maintenance, and operating costs of materials

handling and automotive equipment, initial costs and maintenance of labor-saving equipment, and the cost of utilities in warehouse and office areas. The Navy stores were also separated from troop subsistence operations (including dining halls and messes), which meant that Navy commissaries could no longer use those functions as an outlet for unsold merchandise. Navy customers thus had to bear the entire cost of inventory loss resulting from unsold items.

ARMY AND AIR FORCE COMMISSARIES

The Army and the Air Force, with a common heritage and many more stores than the Navy and the Marine Corps, had no tradition of centralized commissary systems, nor strong headquarters organizations, controlling their stores. However, in 1972 the Army had initiated a new organization, the Troop Support Agency, with multiple responsibilities, including a commissary branch.

Army policy guidance was provided by the deputy chief of staff for logistics through the Troop Support Directorate. Commissary officers made their own purchasing and stocking decisions, adhering to Army commissary regulations as much or as little as they wished. Daily assistance on a working level was available through TSA (formerly the Food Service Center), which had moved to Fort Lee, Virginia, from Chicago in 1972. Limited assistance was also available from the headquarters of various commands in the United States as well as U.S. Army Europe and U.S. Army Pacific. Because of the management assistance policy adopted in 1973, individual post commanders still retained responsibility for the support and operation of each store.

The Air Force had tighter supervision and control over its stores, but it did not have the direct chain of command enjoyed by the Navy. As of 1974, policy and guidance came from the Supply Support and Services Office at Air Force Headquarters in the Pentagon, while professional assistance came from the Air Force Commissary Stores Branch in the Air Force Services Office in Philadelphia,



1972-91: TSA. Weatherly Hall, Building 12400 at Fort Lee, Virginia, housed the U.S. Army Troop Support Agency's headquarters. TSA photo, DeCA historical file



1946 - 1981: NAVY HEADQUARTERS. The Navy's headquarters for commissary operations-the Navy Ship's Stores Office (NSSO), the Navy Resale Systems Office (NRSO), and the Navy Resale and Services Support Office (NAVRESSO)—were located in this building in Brooklyn, New York, pictured here in the 1970s. Military Market, Army Times Publications

an adjunct of the Air Force Logistics Command.

However, the base commanders retained responsibility for store operations. Stocking and commodity purchasing decisions were made at the store level. Years later, Bill Moran, one of AFCOMS' "founding fathers" and that agency's director of operations, remembered, "The operation of the stores was left up to the local store manager and commissary officer, who worked for the base commander. ... There was no standardization, no uniformity, no continuity of operations in merchandising, stock assortments, store layout. ... The store at each base was determined

by the attitude and experience of each local commissary officer. If you had a highly motivated commissary officer, you had a good commissary. If you had one that wasn't, you didn't."

MARINE CORPS AND COAST GUARD COMMISSARIES

The Marine Corps, with far fewer stores, was able to address each of them individually. This level of attention increased professionalism and customer service at each location and enabled the Corps to be the first service to develop a sophisticated, automated inventory system.

The thirteen Marine Corps stores oper-

ated in a decentralized fashion, with some policy and audit assistance coming from the Supply Department's commissary branch of the Support Services Division at Marine Corps Headquarters. Store officers sometimes ran both the commissary and the exchange, and while they were under the supervision of the base commander, they made all purchasing and stocking decisions. Centralized control would arrive in 1979 with the establishment of the first Marine Corps commissary complex.

Years later, in 1986-1987, the Marine Corps commissary system became the first to implement electronic ordering, invoicing and funds transfer, using their computerized Enhanced Commissary Management Information System. The Marines had no trouble with this system, in part because they had only two complexes with a small number of stores. Still, the system's reliability was impressive.

Meanwhile, the Coast Guard, with only three stores, also ran its operation on an individual basis. These stores answered to the Department of Transportation and the resale programs branch of the Supply Services Division at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington.

A 'TWILIGHT ZONE'

Whatever the service, commissaries between 1955 to 1976 operated in a "twilight zone." The stores were mandated by Congress and existed all over the world. However, because of the attacks the commissaries had endured in the early 1950s, employees and customers were encouraged to say little about them. AFCOMS' Bill Moran recalled years later that before their



IN 1974, THE SURCHARGE was set at 3 percent. To the Army and Air Force, this meant a straight charge of 3 percent on the total at the register; to the Navy and Marines, it meant an overall average of 3 percent. In 1976, the surcharge was raised to 4 percent; in April 1983, it was raised to 5 percent. It has remained at that level ever since.

ECHOES OF FLIGHT: Stores Operated in Former Hangars

EFORE 1991, commissaries were often placed inside whatever old, unused, or obsolete structures were available. Warehouses, libraries, dining halls, morgues: They've all been used for grocery stores. A section of Chapter 2 in this book deals specifically with old cavalry structures that became sales commissaries on Army posts. Similarly, on airfields used by the Navy, the Army Air Corps and Army Air Forces, and the Air Force, aircraft hangars worked admirably as grocery stores. Large enough to contain a warehouse as well as the sales store, with aircraft aprons that became big parking lots, these structures were ideal for commissary duty.

There were many hangar commissaries. Here are a few that were particularly well-known:

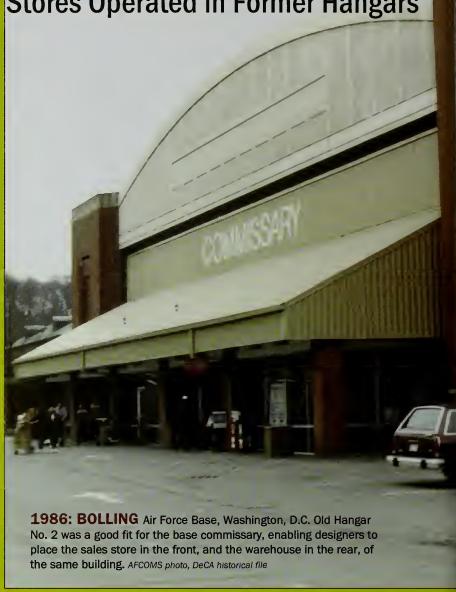
Bolling Air Force Base, Washington, D.C.: Bolling's Hangar 2 was just twenty-nine years old when all of the base's aircraft and helicopter operations ceased in 1968, and the big hangar immediately became an anachronism. At the same time, the base commissary was a customer's night-mare: long waiting lines to enter the store, to get a cart, to go down every narrow aisle, to check out, to pick up the groceries from a loading dock, and to leave the parking lot. Despite all these problems, customers came back for the savings, and twelve registers couldn't handle the volume of business the store generated.

The unused hangar offered the perfect solution, and a sales commissary and warehouse were built inside it. The store opened for business on September 29, 1970. It had more than 30,000 square feet in the sales area, aisles twice as wide as those in the old store, seventeen registers, the latest meat-wrapping equipment, oversized frozen and chill display cases and backup storage, many additional line items, and, of course, a huge parking lot.

The commissary remained there for nineteen years, but eventually those customers who had never experienced the joys of shopping in the previous store began to consider the Hangar 2 store inadequate. The Air Force Commissary Service (AFCOMS) ultimately replaced it with a brand-new commissary that opened for business on March 13, 1990. It wasn't much bigger than the Hangar 2 store, but it had additional amenities: state-of-the-art equipment, wider aisles, a deli, fish market, bakery, and a mini-com (initially called a "Wee-Serv" by AFCOMS).

Edzell, Scotland: Built for the Royal Air Force, Edzell's main missions during World War II were to prepare planes—both new and damaged—for combat. The base later became a boneyard for old aircraft. Then in 1960, the Royal Air Force let the U.S. Navy open a security group activity (NSGA) with sophisticated communications and tracking equipment at Edzell. Soon the Navy opened a small commissary, and, in 1966, replaced it with a bigger store inside a 1940-vintage aircraft hangar.

The store used only 3,520 square feet of the hangar and stocked only 1,700 line items, but during the NSGA's heyday it successfully



served a patron base of eighteen hundred customers. It also supported Navy stores at Machrihanish, Brawdy, West Ruislip, St. Magwan, and Thurso, as well as a Coast Guard store in the Shetland Islands.

When Edzell closed on March 29, 1997, 10 of the store's last 18 employees were citizens of the United Kingdom. The two last Americans at the store, commissary officer Annette Corsey and her deputy, Clifton Rouse, had both closed stores before—she at Ankara, Turkey, he at RAF Burtonwood. "I hope this will be the last time I'm involved in a store decommissioning," Corsey said at the time. "It can be thoroughly exhausting, physically and mentally."

Goodfellow Air Force Base, San Angelo, Texas: This Army airfield, opened in 1941, had a commissary by 1947. Sometime between August 1949 and March 1950, it was closed—temporarily, as it turned out—due to the Philbin congressional committee's efforts to reduce the number of commissaries. By 1956 a store had reopened; it was a former dining hall in Building 217. Despite its low ceiling, small size, two registers, and cramped quarters, it remained the base commissary until January 1976.

A bigger structure was needed, so Building 209, a hangar built in 1941, became the commissary on January 27, 1976. A welcome relief from the tiny old store, it represented a considerable increase in sales area, storage space, and administrative office size. It was located directly



across from a new exchange facility, with a five-thousand-square-foot area separating the two buildings. That space was called "Heritage Plaza" and included exposed aggregate concrete, benches. In 1976, the store was named "Best Commissary in U.S. Air Force Security Services" and was a nominee items than its predecessor. Its spaciousness and its newer equipment were big improvements.

Though not a modern store, it remained in business for twelve years, until AFCOMS opened a brand-new facility on September 6, 1988. This was Building 213, designed as a commissary from the foundation up. It had nine checkouts and a shopping area of 25,800 square feet.

Naval Base/Ship Yard/Support Activity Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Philadelphia area has been home to shipbuilding activities since early colonial times, and the Philadelphia Naval Ship Yard, established in 1801, was one of the nation's oldest. It was home to a commissary by 1948, and,

given the age of the base, it probably had a ship's store ashore long before that. It closed due to the Philbin Congressional Committee's agreement with the armed forces (see Chapter 7) sometime between August 1949 and March 1950, but it reopened a few years later.

A replacement store, built inside a World War II seaplane hangar [Building 653], opened February 19, 1974 (see photo, page 39). The hangar was unique enough to be nominated for the National Register of Historical Places. Its architectural significance lay in its "large-span con-

grassy areas, shrubs, trees, planters, and for AFCOMS' L. Mendel Rivers Best Commissary Award. It had seven checkouts and 15,000 square feet of shopping area, and 4,000 more line

crete arch construction as applied to an aircraft hangar." Together with a seaplane launching ramp in the Delaware River and several catapult facilities, it also helped garner the "Flying Boat Research and Development" portion of the shipyard a nomination to the National Register.

Even without such nominations, the building was impressive. At its peak, the commissary—which took up only a fraction of the hangar's floorspace—had a sales area of 15,200 square feet, a 22,627square-foot warehouse, twelve checkouts, and over eighty employees. It stayed in business in the same location for twenty-one years. DeCA inherited the store but ultimately had to close it on September 30, 1995, when base realignment and closure actions phased out the Philadelphia operations.

Sand Point Commissary, Naval Air Station Seattle,

Washington: When the Naval Air Station Seattle opened in 1939, it probably had a small commissary store, but none are in the historic record. Nearby Fort Lawton, though, is acknowledged to have had the best commissary in the vicinity. When that post closed, a huge aircraft hangar on the Sand Point portion of the naval air station became home to a new commissary on June 27, 1968.

The hangar, Building 193, had been built in 1941 as a seaplane hangar. Unlike its Philadelphia cousin, this hangar used far more timber than concrete, and little steel. Its roof was supported by immense wooden beams from the forests of the state of Washington.

The hangar was large enough to accommodate the exchange, the commissary, and their warehouses. The commissary had 12,996 square feet of sales area, twelve checkouts, and a fish market—a standard feature in the Puget Sound area. It also had large produce and dairy sections, frozen foods, and a meat market. Between 1968 and 1995, the number of line items increased to 11,000, while the staff decreased from 85 people to 44.

The store flouted convention by actually welcoming children 10 and under as long as they were supervised by adults, while those age 11 and older could come in unaccompanied and were treated as full-fledged customers. On the other hand, the store's one-way aisles were strictly traditional and delighted the store's older clientele. The policy was not done in deference to the customers, however; the narrow aisles (only 4 to 5 feet wide) made the one-way rule a necessity.

The store closed June 3, 1995, and was replaced by a new store at the Everett Naval Base's Smokey Point Support Complex ... and not a moment too soon! The old hangar had been built on fill dirt over a body

> of marshy ground known locally as "Mud Lake." By 1995, nature had begun to reassert itself, and the hangar started settling. The commissary's doors no longer closed properly, and its floor was continually cracking. Meanwhile, the exchange was noticeably sinking!

> After moving to the new commissary, the feature of the old store employees missed the most was the group of veterans who used to gather every Saturday near the store's entrance to reminisce and tell war stories. The Sand Point store had been their gathering place, and once it was gone, those who could not drive the extra distance were, unhappily, left behind. Their numbers had already dropped from 30 in 1985 to 12 in 1995. Today, only one of the vets is known to still be alive.



centralization, commissaries "operated as though they didn't exist—that was the philosophy ... no articles in the base newspapers, no articles in local newspapers ... They were there, but they were something you just didn't talk about." In other words, the less said, the better; the less chance that someone in the private sector would get upset, believing that the commissaries were taking money out of his pocket.

Service members were expected to be thankful for whatever cramped, outmoded, or badly lit commissary they were provided. At the same time, they were admonished not to brag to nonmilitary friends about their benefit or the savings.

Moran also recalled that manning the commissaries was difficult, facilities were overburdened, and the stores could not carry many of the typical holiday items for Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Valentine's Day that were available in just about any private-sector store. There would be gradual improvements, but they were mostly achieved at the local level until sweeping changes came about in 1975-76.

COSTS AND THE SURCHARGE

The annual appropriations of the installation and command where each commissary was located supported the cost of commissary employees' salaries, building maintenance, local transportation costs, and services such as trash pickup, snow removal, security measures, and fire protection.

Commissary sales stores operated as appropriated fund activities. The federal government paid salaries and the surcharge helped pay for new buildings, remodeling, and some supplies and equipment, enabling the food to be sold at cost. In 1974, the services estimated the resultant savings to the customer to be about 33 percent.

In other words, the surcharge was used to offset operating losses from shrinkage, spoilage, pilferage, and mark-downs, and to pay for utilities within the United States. It was also used to pay for operating supplies such as shopping bags and meat-wrapping paper; for equipment and display cases, and the maintenance of such equipment; and for commercial transportation within CONUS. In addition, Navy stores in Alaska and Hawaii were required to pay 14 percent and 7 percent, respectively, toward supporting surface transportation costs.

The surcharge was not uniform. It had fluctuated by several percentage points since 1952, and each service calculated and obtained the surcharge in different ways. The Air Force charged 3 percent in all its

stores. The Army charged 3 percent in CONUS, but only 2.5 percent overseas. The Army and Air Force's surcharge was a percentage of the total bill, so it applied to all items equally.

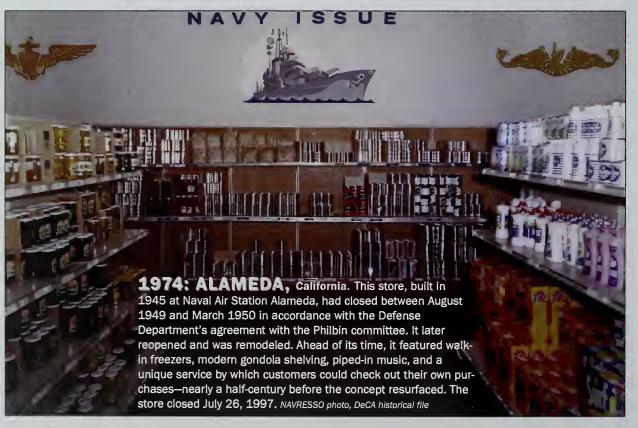
In 1974, Congress set the surcharge at 3 percent. To the Army and the Air Force, this meant a flat charge of 3 percent on the total at the register; to the Navy and Marines, it meant an overall average of 3 percent. In 1976, the surcharge increased to 4 percent; in April 1983, it went to 5 percent, where it has remained ever since.

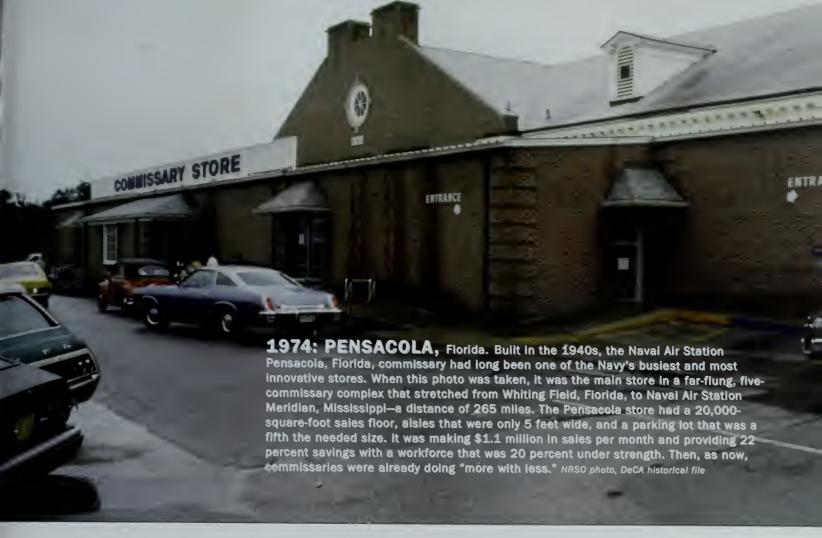
Sometimes commissary construction and modernization were financed through special appropriations in the DoD budget. However, budgetary restrictions established during the 1960s and early 1970s caused the Navy to use special assessments on surcharge earnings to finance construction and facilities improvements.

The purchase of items for resale was financed by revenues in the form of stock funds for the support of store inventories. When the items were sold, the stock fund was reimbursed. This cycle of spending and reimbursement led to the use of the terms "revolving" and "rotating" funds.

In the early 1970s, regulations limiting the number of items that could be carried had been dropped. Each service decided

> what it would sell in its stores; for example, the Navy did not sell soft drinks and the Marine stores did not sell tobacco. But by 1974, the only major limitation to numbers of items carried was shelf space. Stores normally stocked between 2,000 and 4,000 line items, but a few newer stores were able to stock and display 4,500 to 5,000 items. This contrasted sharply with civilian supermarkets that carried 8,000 to 9,000 items. Civilian stores carried many items that commissaries could





not, such as housewares, magazines and newspapers, pet accessories (such as toys and flea collars), and alcoholic beverages.

HEALTH & BEAUTY AIDS AND TOBACCO

By the start of fiscal 1974, private sector supermarkets had for years been carrying health and beauty aids (HBA), which included everything from aspirin, shampoo, and mouthwash to cosmetics. But the services had only recently started to increase the number of such items in their authorized commissary stock list. Previously, most stores had carried only a small number of such items. Traditionally, the Navy carried none at all, deferring this business to its exchanges. The other services had stocked a few items such as shaving cream and razors. Recognizing the demand for such items at the commissary—even then, the customers wanted the convenience of one-stop shopping-the Air Force started increasing its selection of HBA items on a trial basis in 1969. The Army followed suit in 1970, the Navy started in 1972, and the Marine Corps authorized the HBA line in 1973.

Army and Air Force stores carried cigarettes and other tobacco products, as well

as candy, gum, soft drinks (stateside only), waxes, polishes, and insecticides. The Navy did not, again because these items were available in Navy exchanges. The Marines, meanwhile, banned the sale of cigarettes and tobacco products in their commissaries as of July 31, 1973, nine years after the Surgeon General's warning was first placed upon packs of cigarettes.

NEW MERCHANDISING POLICIES

As fiscal 1974 began, the services had only recently altered their longtime aversion to all types of promotions. This practice had been established in order to avoid any appearance of advertising or favoritism for certain products or brand lines. In the mid-1960s, however, the Air Force and Navy had started accepting coupons in order to encourage shoppers to come in and get the best price possible for their goods. The Marines had done the same in 1970, and the Department of Defense had ordered the Army to follow suit in 1971. In the autumn of 1970, the Marines led the way in commissaries' accepting brand-name, point-of-purchase materials (special signs, shelf talkers, endcap displays, and the like). The Air Force followed the Marines' example in January 1971, the Army went along

in November 1971, and the Navy joined in during March 1972.

Rules were established to ensure equitable treatment of all manufacturers and suppliers. Only a limited number of special promotions could be accepted from any one manufacturer or supplier. Suppliers could offer voluntary price reductions (VPRs) in return for space to set up promotional displays in the commissaries, but this was done during carefully articulated and specific time frames.

The biggest difference between the old and new policies was that commissaries could now start taking advantage of manufacturers' expertise in marketing and displays, as well as their special offers, promotions, and prices. By doing so, the stores were better serving the customers, who would now find in commissaries the same sort of attractive displays and promotions that they would expect to find in private-sector stores.

THE ROLE OF THE DEFENSE PERSONNEL SUPPORT CENTER

The Defense Personnel Support Center (DPSC) was the chief link between the military and the American food industry. Established in 1965 and located in

Mike Domitrovich: Career Seabee, AFCOMS Legend

IKE DOMITROVICH is as American as the melting pot gets. Born the son of immigrants—his dad was from Croatia, his mom from Czechoslovakia—he grew up in Masontown, Pennsylvania, south of Pittsburgh, an area that has been home to immigrants from all over the world since the early nineteenth century. When he grew up and got married, it was to a girl of Polish descent.

In 1939, at the age of fourteen, Domitrovich got a job with Morris Lebrowitz, the owner of Masontown's Union Market, who sent him to a meat cutter's school in Toledo, Ohio. That age may seem too young to be a meat cutter, but the Great Depression forced children to grow up in a hurry. After four weeks of school, he emerged with something that takes most people years to attain: a marketable skill. Taking great pride in his trade, he saw himself not as a *butcher* (a word that can have negative connotations) but as a *professional meat cutter*.

Domitrovich returned to Masontown, but in January 1943, at the age of seventeen, he enlisted in the Seabees, the famous fighting Naval Combat Construction Battalions that took their name from a play on words using their initials. Because of his

training and experience, they placed him in food service as meat cutter, chef and baker. His unit—the 114th Seabees—went first to the United Kingdom on the transport ship USS *Lejeune* (AP74), and then to France aboard a Canadian LCI (Landing Craft, Infantry). He saw his first battle action off the coast of France in August 1944, when German shore guns opened up on his LCI, and he "got splattered on" when the shells exploded in the water nearby. He came through unscathed, and later recalled, "The good Lord was always watching over me."

The 114th went ashore two months after the D-Day invasion and helped clear Cherbourg harbor of mines and wreckage. At night, Domitrovich worked primarily as a baker; "You don't need a meat cutter to cut Spam," he explains. Spam, of course, was infamous during the war for being fed to the Allies' armed forces in abundance.* By day, he helped with unloading operations. A storm had wrecked an improvised harbor, and the Seabees used amphibious DUKWs ("Ducks") to ferry supplies from ships to the shore. They then transferred everything to trucks, and helped drive the trucks to the front. (Domitrovich drove plenty of trucks, but only once got to try his hand at a Duck.) When the 114th transferred to Nantes, Domitrovich again served as the unit's baker. They again cleared the harbor, and suffered some casualties on shore from land mines.

In December 1944, Mike began to find out what "Join the Navy and See the World" really meant. He and half of the 114th returned to the states, went briefly to the Seabees base at Davisville, Rhode Island, took a train across the continent to Seattle, and boarded the Liberty ship USS *Carl Schurz* to the Aleutian Islands. After making stops at Kodiak, Dutch Harbor, and Adak, they arrived at Attu Island, where they built airfields and communications stations. Domitrovich was the



"chief cook, baker, and bottle washer" on Attu, and he finally got to do some meat cutting, because Spam was no longer the predominant available meat. Salmon and halibut were also on the menu. Domitrovich filleted the salmon, but he froze the halibut and cut it, frozen, with a meat saw. In August 1945, he briefly went to remote Buldir Island, which was so isolated the men didn't know the war had ended until ten days after the fact.

Late in 1945, Domitrovich and forty Seabees were sent to Petropavlovsk, a port on Russia's Kamchatka peninsula, where they built a weather station. He didn't stay there long; his skills were in demand elsewhere. He returned to Attu, and then went north to Point Barrow, where his unit drilled for oil, long before the building of the Trans Alaska pipeline. His next stop was Kodiak in 1947, where he worked in food service, and began his long association with the commissaries. While there, Domitrovich learned his buddies at the Kamchatka weather station had been suddenly expelled from Russia, without explanation. It turned out to be one of the earliest unfriendly acts of the Cold War.

In early 1948, after Kodiak's dining hall was named its naval district's best, Mike was transferred to Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. Before he arrived, though, the base disappeared! "When I got to Philadelphia, I was told they'd closed Willow Grove," he remembers with a laugh. "So instead, I was sent to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center near Chicago."

At Great Lakes, Domitrovich assisted with the food-service operation as a meat cutter for nine dining halls. He had prepared food for large groups of men before, but nothing came close to Great Lakes, where he helped feed eighteen thousand men per day. Nothing, that is, until the Korean War started, when he helped to feed thirty-eight thousand!

^{* —} So much so that Nikita Khrushchev, Soviet Premier in the early 1960s, later said it had "won the war" for the Soviet Union. Spam may have been monotonous, but it was better than nothing!

While at Great Lakes, Domitrovich met and married Florynce Szwedo. But it wasn't long before the Korean War began, and he was shipped out aboard the USS *Bayonne* (PF 21) as the ship's one and only baker. In early 1953, he was sent to the Navy commissary at the Guam Naval Depot, where Florynce was able to rejoin him. She brought along their son, Michael, who had been born in 1952, while his dad was still aboard the *Bayonne*. He was eighteen months old before his dad met him; another son, Brad, would be born in 1956.

In October 1954, Domitrovich transferred back to the naval station in Philadelphia, where he became the commissary's meat market manager. Three years later he returned to sea as a food service officer, running the mess aboard the ice-

breaker USS *Burton Island* (AGB-1). The ship participated in Operation Deep Freeze III, helping to supply Antarctic bases. They then went about as far north as you can go, stopping at Point Barrow in 1958 and Thule, Greenland, in 1959.

Domitrovich returned to the tropical Marianas in 1959-61 as a food service officer on Saipan, running the mess while performing collateral duty in the island's commissary. Operations on Saipan were small, with only about thirty people eating at the mess. He remembers that while he was on Saipan, a supply problem in the Marianas was alleviated when people on nearby Tinian grew produce for sale in the Saipan and Guam commissaries. (see photographs, pages 186-87, and 239)

In 1961 Domitrovich became food service officer on the destroyer USS *Turner Joy* (DD-951)—a ship later involved in the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964. By then, he had already been reassigned to Philadelphia, with a brief detour to Brooklyn to take the commissary operations course at the Navy Ship's Store Office (NSSO), where the Navy's commissary headquarters was located. He remained in Philadelphia until retiring from the Navy as a master chief petty officer in 1965.

Domitrovich briefly worked for Acme supermarkets, but soon he was back with the Navy in Philadelphia, where he became the region's meat and produce operations specialist, as well as the Philadelphia store's meat department manager. In this dual capacity he supervised meat and produce operations in Navy commissaries at Naval Training Center Bainbridge (Maryland), Naval Air Station Lakehurst (New Jersey), and Naval Air Station Mitchel Field (New York). During his tenure, he helped the Philadelphia store move from old Building 29 in



THE EXTERIOR of the Naval Supply Depot Guam commissary. These were facades built over old Quonset Huts. For an interior view, see pages 186-87.



the Navy Yard into the big seaplane hangar (see photo, page 39), where the store remained until it closed in 1994.

While in Philadelphia, he went to night school at St. Joseph's University, emerging with a bachelor's degree in food marketing in 1973. He held a 3.0 (B) average, despite working all day and keeping late hours at school. His most memorable and valuable courses were food science, theology, psychology, and ethics.

After earning his degree, Domitrovich left Philadelphia for San Antonio, to help establish the Air Force Commissary Service. Thus, after an entire career with the Navy, he became one of AFCOMS' "founding fathers." Over the subsequent twelve years he traveled around the world, teaching younger men and women the rudiments of the meat business. Ultimately, he became one of the most recognized and popular people in AFCOMS. He retired in January 1988.

Throughout his life, Domitrovich has had a firm faith, believing that God and St. Brendan—the patron saint of sailors—had watched over him in times of peril. He has kept that faith, even when Florynce passed on, just short of their fiftieth anniversary, under circumstances that were especially hard to take. They were in an auto accident, and Domitrovich was badly injured; Florynce was unhurt, but she suffered a heart attack and died at the scene, in the seat next to him. He misses her terribly, but tries not to dwell on this loss. He knows there are reasons for his still being here.

Domitrovich now lives in Pipe Creek, Texas, near Brad, his younger son. (Michael is in Fargo, North Dakota). At age eighty-one, he still is very active. He spends most of his time doing volunteer work in San Antonio, helping with a soup kitchen and other activities at several churches of different denominations and with the Knights of Columbus. He does administrative work at Wilford Hall Medical Center on Lackland Air Force Base, and at the Naval/Marine Corps Center in downtown San Antonio. He also meets monthly with Navy buddies at the Fleet Reserve Center, and with his old AFCOMS pals.

What a schedule! But then, Domitrovich is today just as he always was: a believer in making every day count.

With thanks to Mike, Brad, and Michael Domitrovich, Carroll Allred, Benny Harper, Mike Hawkins, and Eric Snayzee —Author



1970s: PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO. This store served one of the oldest posts in the United States. Founded by the Spanish in 1776, the Presidio became a U.S. Army post in 1846. During World War II, almost every nearby installation had its own store, but as time passed, most of them gradually closed. The Presidio store then served retiree customers from all over the San Francisco Bay area. By 1953, the store served about six thousand families, and was one of the first to become entirely self-service. The store pictured here was replaced by a large, new facility, with twenty-seven registers, in 1994. Even after the Presidio ceased being a military installation in 1994, the store remained open until June 1, 2002. TSA photo, DeCA historical file

Philadelphia, the DPSC was, in 1974, the largest arm of the Defense Supply Agency. It was the primary supplier of food to the military services with the mission of buying, inspecting, storing, and distributing food supplies for worldwide consumption by the armed services and other authorized government organizations. DPSC also dealt in clothing, textiles, and medical supplies, but providing subsistence and retail food items was its major mission. In fiscal 1973 alone, food and subsistence had made up 61.6 percent of DPSC purchases—a total of \$830.8 million.

Twenty supply offices operated under the auspices of four subsistence regional headquarters that were located in Chicago, New York, New Orleans, and Oakland. The supply offices purchased "less than car lot" requirements of fresh fruits and vegetables from local markets. (A car lot was the amount of material that could be loaded into one railroad car.) The goods were delivered to central distribution points, where they were consolidated with stocked items into economical transportation units for delivery to commissaries.

DPSC supplied commissaries in the United States, and it also operated a direct delivery system to send food to Army and Air Force stores in Europe and the Far East via seaborne container shipments. These were received, packed, and directshipped from DPSC's central depot in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

BRAND-NAME CONTRACTS

In 1973-1974, about 95 percent of commissary grocery items were of a brandname nature, and 90 percent of those were procured through brand-name contracts (BNCs) negotiated by DPSC. The purpose of these contracts was to obtain for commissaries the lowest possible pricesprices as low as, or lower than, those offered to other buyers. DPSC negotiated brand-name contracts for the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The Marine Corps did not officially use BNCs, but referred to those of the other services as their guides.

A brand-name product available on a nationwide basis could be included under this type of contract if customer demand for the item existed in at least twenty-five commissary stores. To order these products, stores would refer to supply bulletins, published by DPSC, that listed the items available, a description of each, and the price for each geographical area. Delivery orders would be placed by each store through the contractor.

Items not listed in the supply bulletins could still be procured as long as consumer demand for the product was consistent and substantial. Those demands would be determined and articulated by the resale item selection boards at each store and in each region. In all, DPSC managed about 38,000 BNC items for the commissaries.

MULTIPLE STUDIES PROPOSE MULTIPLE CHANGES

For a few years after the Vietnam War, studies on commissaries became less concerned about the bottom line and more concerned with the welfare of the customers. Studies were less hostile to the benefit and began focusing more upon how to preserve the benefit than upon how to end it.

One such study, a 1974 report prepared for the Navy Resale System Office (NRSO) by Control Analysis Corporation of Palo Alto, California, addressed the costs and possible effects of reducing or eliminating the Navy's commissary benefits. Its conclusions, extremely unfavorable to doing away with the Navy stores, warned that closing the Navy commissaries would cost individual patrons \$2.48 in lost cost savings for every tax dollar saved.

If the stores became self-supporting, the projected 7.2-percent price increase necessary to keep them operating would mean a 30-percent reduction in sales. Taken to its logical, long-run conclusion, the price increase predicted by the report translated into a continuing cycle of fewer customers, increasing system costs, increasing prices to the customers who remained, and the eventual failure of the system.

Throughout the 1970s, several events foreshadowed the eventual emergence of a single military commissary system. In 1975, a study by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) identified three options to improve military commissary operations. The options did not include privatization, but did mention the establishment of a single DoD-run commissary system—which was exactly what was implemented in 1991 with the formation of the Defense Commissary Agency.

AIR FORCE 'ALTERNATIVES'

A year earlier, an Air Force study group had identified six alternatives to existing commissary operations and recommended that the service proceed on its own to transform commissaries to self-supporting operations by fiscal 1976.

This goal would never be attained because it was overcome by commissary centralization. Nonetheless, it's revealing to see what the Air Force study had in mind. One alternative was to combine commissaries and exchanges under the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES). The study group thought, "The marriage of commissary and exchange operations would produce savings through better utilization of facilities such as marehouses, more efficient utilization of a transferable common skilled labor force (warehousemen, stockers, and cashiers), and economies of scale in product lines and facility operation."

The group felt this alternative offered "the potential advantage of placing commissaries under experienced retail store management." But the shortage of experienced, professional Air Force and Army commissary employees in 1974 was solved with the formation of professional career fields by TSA and AFCOMS in 1975-76. Still, the report accurately predicted the future:

"Commissary sales do not correlate with active duty force size but appear to be, in the main, largely responsive to burgeoning retired ranks, inflation push, and convenience pull. Should these trends continue, as they are likely to do, real commissary sales will surely continue to rise at a constant if not increasing rate. ... the numbers of commissary employees will also rise in sharp contrast to falling active duty strength. This unfortunate dichotomy will compromise USAF's aggressive efforts to increase the



1978: GULFPORT, Mississippi. Built in 1942, this commissary had a sales floor of 10,065 square feet, a warehouse of 15,267 square feet, and six checkouts. Above the canopy is the logo of the SeaBees, the primary customers at the facility. It continued serving its customers until a modern store replaced it in 2000. The store was severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, but was repaired and reopened by May 2006. NAVRESSO photo, DeCA historical file

'Combat-to-Support' ratio. It also places demands on our relatively fixed yet inflationeroded budget.

"In light of the foregoing ... we can anticipate Congress and OMB to mount continued and increasingly aggressive attacks on use of appropriated funds to subsidize active duty and retired military grocery bills and to push vigorously to disestablish commissaries. On the other hand, in this era of unparalleled inflation, especially in food products, commissary benefits become all the more attractive to military families.

"Accordingly, the military departments should take concerted action to ensure perpetuation of commissary privileges. And, if necessary, service members should be willing to forego a small percentage of savings derived from the commissary to guarantee the larger benefit of continued commissary operation."

The report's prognostications were cor-

rect. In the years to come, all facets of this prediction either eventually occurred or were seriously discussed as possible options.

THE BOWERS COMMISSION

In 1975, the Office of Management and Budget and Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger prompted William K. Brehm, the assistant secretary of defense for manpower and reserve



Brig. Gen. Emmett W. Bowers

affairs, to order an all-service study on the best approach for future commissary operations. Brehm named Army Brig. Gen. Emmett W. Bowers, then the current commander of the Army Troop Support Agency, to lead the study. It was commonly referred to both as the Bowers Commission and the Bowers Committee. From February 18 to mid-June 1975, they met in the Commonwealth Building in Rosslyn, Virginia, across the Potomac River from Georgetown and northwest Washington, D.C. This was the same building occupied by the commissary branch of the support services division for the Marine Corps' Installations and Logistics Department.

At the same time, it seemed the Department of Defense might decide to eliminate the commissary subsidy. In 1975,

> Schlesinger proposed in the DoD budget request for fiscal 1976 that commissaries should be made self-supporting by October 1, 1977. Even as the Bowers study was ongoing, Air Force Maj. Gen. Daniel L. Burkett, deputy commander AAFES, was tasked to investigate the possibility of that organization absorbing the Army and Air Force commissaries, as the 1974 Air Force study had suggested,

THEY WERE GOING TO TAKE TRIXIE'

The Closing of the Commissary and the American Evacuation of Tehran

ASFR 1977, after two tours in a man and eleven years in the Army, are Fisher's first assignment for Surphy Troop Support Agency was as an armissary officer of the store in Tehran,* Iran. With him were his wife, Kathy, and their sons, Chris and Stephen. It wasn't Tom's last commissary assignment, but it would be the most memorable.

While there was no military base in Tehran, there was a joint command of all military branches. The Army operated a commissary for the local community, and a big, new store, built using funds from the Shah of Iran, was opened on July 13, 1978—just a few months before the political situation deteriorated. One silver lining in all the subsequent dark clouds was that no patron surcharge money was used to build the facility.

The State Department had a small, inadequate, overpriced grocery store at the embassy. Most Americans on government assignments—about ten thousand, including families—shopped at the Army commissary. Other Americans in town, working for over two hundred private companies, had no commissary privileges, and had to shop on the local economy. The commissary prices were better than

both the local stores and the embassy store. The commissary selection, with 11,000 to 12,000 line items, was phenomenal, equal to many stores in Europe or the states. A weekly airlift of produce and hearty chill goods kept the produce, according to Fisher, "as fresh as it was at a lot of stateside commissaries."

Still, Tehran, the end of the pipeline, needed a 120-day lead time for ordering. That was quite a challenge. As Fisher put it, "In February we were deciding what kind of hot dogs we were going to be eating in July." The pipeline also necessitated carrying one item that absolutely no one liked: canned, nonrefrigerated milk. Fresh milk that could hold its shelf life was not yet available. Fisher recalls encouraging people to shake the canned milk and refrigerate it, to no avail. One customer said, "I can't get my dog to drink this stuff, and you expect me to drink it?" Fisher couldn't argue, and readily admits



ARMY MAJ. TOM FISHER, commissary store officer (right), and his deputy, Capt. Patrick Quinn, in the new store in Tehran, Iran, 1978. Because of security concerns, American military personnel stationed in Tehran had to wear civilian clothes, except on formal occasions.

Photos courtesy of Tom & Kathy Fisher

today, "It was pretty terrible-tasting stuff."

Since there was no American military installation, the store was located in the northern part of the city, where foreigners and the more affluent local citizens lived. The Fishers were treated as "our favorite Americans" by the neighbors and had a clean, modern apartment. Their modern quarters contrasted strikingly with the ancient traditions that continued around them. Caravans camped outside the city, and merchants came into town, selling "just about anything," including camel dung for fertilizer. Shepherds brought their flocks into town, selling sheep door to door. Upon making a sale, they would slit the animal's throat and fling it over the buyer's front gate; the animal would bleed to death, and then the buyer would shear its fleece and butcher it.

Part of the store's mission was to support fifty military support teams in Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. "They were in outposts in the middle of nowhere, and they were really dependent upon us," Fisher recalls. "The food was vital to their morale. They would send in an order, and we would shop the order for them. They'd come in by

airplane, car, or truck, and pick it up. I had a team that did nothing but that, full time." On one occasion—New Year's Eve, December 31, 1977—there was a special order that was more high-profile than usual. President Jimmy Carter was visiting Tehran, and the commis-



1979: EVACUATION DAY. Families assembled at the commissary for last-minute shopping on their way to their flight out of Iran. Tom Fisher and one of his sons can be seen standing to the right of the door in the background. Although his family left, Fisher had to remain for several months.

sary was called upon to replenish the galley aboard Air Force One.

The store staff was cosmopolitan. Besides ten American military personnel, there were a hundred civilians of many different nationalities: Iranians, Burmese, Thais, Sri Lankans, Filipinos, Pakistanis, Germans. Some couldn't speak English, but they were all very appreciative of their jobs. Most of them sent money home to their families, and some would take a month's leave every year to visit their families. Upon their return they would make a formal presentation to the commissary team of a gift brought from home, as a show of appreciation and camaraderie.

The peace and tranquility the Fishers enjoyed in Iran evaporated in 1978 when radical groups who

opposed the Shah agitated for the return of the exiled religious leader, the Ayatollah Khomeini. Americans began receiving threatening phone calls and verbal harassment from passing cars. In January 1979, the American school was closed, an indication that things were getting dangerous and American family members would have to leave. Government personnel would stay; those left behind would be allowed to pack up and ship a fraction of their family's personal property. The Fishers had brought nine 1,000-pound containers into Iran, but they could only ship one out. Ultimately, they lost \$12,000 in personal property. Their landlord got their car, appliances, and furniture. They were eventually compensated for only sixty percent of it.

Losing goods was one thing, but when told they would have to leave their pets behind, the families openly rebelled. Fisher remembers, "If any pets were left behind, they would have been consumed by the locals, so if you told someone they can't take Trixie, who'd been in the family for fourteen years, you could forget it! They were going to take Trixie!" Faced with furious opposition, the Air Force relented, and the pets left with the families.

The commissary became the evacuation point. Buses filled with families stopped at the store on their way to the airport so everyone could stock up on snacks for the trip. After the families left, the commissary remained open, but, of course, the store was quiet and sales plummeted. "It was all pretty depressing," Fisher remembers. It was also completely unpredictable, and since he had no guidance from TSA, he had to make a decision to reroute forty-four containers of goods that were coming on ships destined for Iran. "If I was wrong and we ended up staying longer than I expected, we would have gone hungry." It turned out to be the right decision. Had the containers arrived in Tehran, everything in them would soon have been in the revolutionaries' hands. "The containers went all over the world, so at least I saved some money by diverting them elsewhere."

Store personnel made up pallet loads of foodstuffs, getting them ready for airlift to the sites they supported, but when the situation final-



1978: GRAND OPENING, July 13. Maj. Tom Fisher, commissary store officer, addresses the crowd during ceremonies to open the new commissary. This big facility stocked over eleven thousand line items, bringing American food to the end of the pipeline in the Middle East. It had 30,000 square feet of sales space, and nearly 40 to 50,000 square feet of warehouse space. Weekly direct air lift supplied produce, yogurt and cheeses, while dry goods delivered by surface vessel took about 120 days to arrive.

ly collapsed it happened so suddenly that there was no time to actually ship the pallets. Instead, on February 11, 1979, orders came to abandon the store within thirty-six hours. Fisher turned in the store's money to the finance officer. After it was totaled and Fisher received a receipt, the money was burned. The coins were too heavy and had to be left behind. That evening everyone went home, fully expecting to have one more day in the store; Fisher left personal belongings in his office, including his camera, mementoes, and even his eyeglasses.

There was no going back. That very evening, the Shah fled the country, the provisional government dissolved, and chaos ruled. "Every street corner had a guy with a rifle, and that was 'his' street corner, and you didn't go anywhere near him," Fisher says. The store staff was evacuated within a few days, but Fisher was one of forty people who remained behind, housed at the embassy, to help restore normal relations if it became possible. It never did. After a few months, Fisher received orders to leave, so he avoided becoming one of sixty-three Americans taken hostage when the Iranians took over the embassy on November 3, 1979. Of these, fifty-two were held for 444 days.

The commissary, meanwhile, became a supermarket for Iranian shoppers, and was reopened several weeks before the hostages were taken. The revolutionaries in charge of the building had hung portraits of the Ayatollah Khomeini near the registers and spray painted "Death to U.S. Imperialism" and "Do not set on fire—this property belongs to the nation" on the exterior walls. Somehow, it just wasn't the same as "Thanks for Shopping at Your Commissary."

Despite the way things ended, the Fisher family has some pleasant memories of their time in Tehran. "A tour in Iran was one of those secrets," Fisher said. Nobody wanted to go there because it sounded terrible, but once you got there, it was pretty good. When things were peaceful, we enjoyed ourselves, and before everything came apart, we had intended to extend our assignment."

and making them non-appropriated fund (NAF) activities.. The post-Vietnam DoD budget was shrinking, and Burkett was just one of many people who thought the Army and Air Force commissaries would have to emulate the Navy, with one organization operating both commissaries and exchanges. In fact, Program Budget Decision 282, published in January 1975, stated that the Ford Administration's goal was to make commissaries self-supporting within two years.

However, as Burkett said a few years later, "Congress fooled everybody, and in essence told DoD they didn't know what they were talking about." Congress had asked some of the same questions as those asked by Jerry McConnell, editor of Military Market in March 1975: "Why, after something like a hundred years of operation as an appropriated funds-supported fringe benefit, do service commissaries have to be switched over to a completely different mode of operation within just a few months time, with nowhere-near adequate preparation and planning lead time?" Ironically, these were questions that could have easily been asked again fifteen years later.

McConnell couldn't understand why DoD thought it was so important to save the taxpayers \$107 million when the defense budget was "somewhere between \$94 and \$15 billion, depending upon whose figures you believe." He blamed the concept on "a faction within the administration which is anxious to 'prove' that comstores can't hack it in a competitive self-supporting environment."

The American Logistics Association and the Armed Forces Marketing Council, two pro-commissary organizations of long-standing, both testified to the House Armed Services Committee on commissaries' behalf. Citing historical precedence, economic necessity, and the need to keep promises that had been made to the members of the armed forces, both organizations urged restraint and great caution when considering whether or not the stores could ever become self-supporting, given their commitment to selling at cost.

Congress listened to both sides of the

The Bowers Report ... persuaded Congress, the Army, and the Air Force that changes were necessary.

commissary argument and decided to wait for the results of the Bowers Commission study. The commission worked from February to May 1975. Each service was represented by individuals who were familiar with commissary operations. There were several human resource (personnel) and comptroller specialists, as well as a representative from the AAFES.

Speaking early in 2004, Cecil Saunders, the only member of the Bowers Committee representing the Marine Corps, remembered, "We had a good working relationship and lots of dialogue as a group. Individually, we designed the various services' centrally managed commissary systems. This spawned AFCOMS and TSA, and developed into the Marine Corps complexes and distribution systems. General Bowers set our goals and allowed us to be creative, to develop structures that were best suited for each service."

THE BOWERS REPORT

In the end, threatening to make the stores pay their own way had forced the Army and Air Force to act. The Bowers Report, combined with customers writing letters to save their stores, persuaded Congress, the Army, and the Air Force that changes were necessary. The report cleared the way for the services to centralize their stores and preserve the benefit.

McConnell observed that previously, neither service had exhibited "a real understanding of what was needed in commissary management for the past twenty-five years," but now both services seemed "ready to overcome that quarter-century of inattention." He was delighted, he said, that they were finally going to take steps "which proved themselves out in the Navy more than ten years ago."

The report was published at the end of May 1975. It concluded that commissaries needed to correct their serious flaws, paramount of which were inadequate facilities and inexperienced personnel. The commis-

sion believed that these problems could be corrected by creating separate agencies specializing in commissary operations within each service. While the study prompted centralized management for all the services' commissaries, it also recommended that further study of consolidating the separate commissary systems into one agency could take place after two years had passed. In making this recommendation, the report anticipated by nearly fourteen years a future study that would result in the inception of the Defense Commissary Agency.

Schlesinger approved the Bowers Study recommendations and directed the Army and Air Force to implement centralized commissary systems. Among the stipulations were no new manpower spaces, and the agency headquarters could *not* be located in the Washington, D.C., area. This may have been indicative of the country's distrustful mood following the Watergate scandal. It could also have been a simple case of expediency, given that NRSO was already located in Brooklyn, New York, and the Army agency likely to inherit the agencies, TSA, was already in place at Fort Lee, south of Richmond, Virginia.

Consequently, the Army Troop Support Agency became the central agency for managing Army commissaries, effective October 1975. TSA's commissary centralization was completed as of October 1, 1976. That was the same date that the Air Force activated its new commissary agency, the Air Force Commissary Service (AFCOMS), with headquarters at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas.

Because of the large numbers of stores involved (127 Army, 181 Air Force), the emphasis was on those two services' centralization efforts. The Marine Support Services Division's commissary branch already had oversight of the Marines' commissaries, and with only thirteen stores, it had no pressing need to quickly centralize all functions any more than they were already. Nor was there any need to alter the Navy Resale System Office, which had managed commissaries and exchanges, in separate divisions, for years. These service commissary agencies would run the stores for the next fifteen





AFCOMS HEADQUARTERS on "East Kelly" Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas. Originally built as an enlisted men's barracks for Normoyle Quartermaster Depot in 1931, it served various functions as time passed. It was the depot headquarters during World War II, and many of the gliders used in the D-Day invasion were shipped from there. It became AFCOMS headquarters in 1976, DeCA's Midwest Region headquarters from 1991 to 2004, and DeCA East Region's San Antonio Office, 2005-06. AFCOMS photo by Pete Skirbunt, DeCA historical file

years, and were the direct predecessors of the Defense Commissary Agency.

Meanwhile, the Defense Supply Agency (DSA), which remained the dominant force in logistics functions throughout the Defense Department, became the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) on January 1, 1977. Its duties did not change, but its new title reflected its increasingly vital role in the nation's military preparedness.

HEADQUARTERS LOCATIONS

The Troop Support Agency's commissary functions remained at Fort Lee, Virginia, the home of the Army's Food Service Center. TSA initially continued to provide clothing, field laundry services, and subsistence, as well as commissary services. When commissary centralization occurred, responsibility for the commissary functions remained in TSA's hands. It made its headquarters in several buildings, eventually landing most of its functions in Building 12400, Weatherly Hall, where it stayed until September 1991. Of course, it continued working closely with both the Defense Logistics Agency at Cameron Station, Virginia, and the Defense Personnel Supply Center in Philadelphia.

AFCOMS occupied an available structure, Building 3030 at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas. The base was home to the San

Antonio Air Materiel Area, and was one of several logistics bases belonging to the Air Materiel Command, headquartered at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. This command had loosely supervised most of the Air Force commissaries around the world for several years.

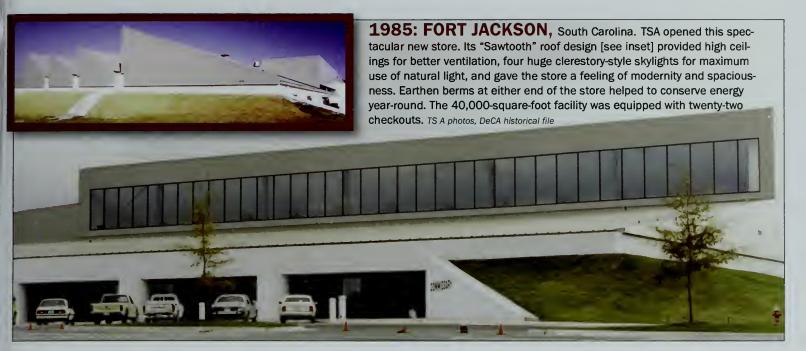
AFCOMS was located on a detached portion of the base known prior to 1948 as the Normoyle Quartermaster Depot. As of 1976 it was referred to as "East Kelly." The Headquarters building had been built as a barracks in 1931, and had later been used as the depot headquarters. It was large enough to handle AFCOMS' worldwide duties, but it needed renovation. The third floor and attic needed extensive cleaning because they had been filled with pigeons. A few years after completing a renovation, the building was named for Maj. Gen. Robert C. Thompson, the first chairman of AFCOMS' board of directors and a key figure in the organization's inception.

In 1976, the Navy Resale System Office was located in an aging structure on Third Avenue between 29th and 30th Streets in Brooklyn, New York. NRSO and its predecessor, the Navy Ship's Store Office, had been located there since July 1946. In 1979, the organization changed its name again, becoming the Navy Resale and Services Support Office (NAVRESSO), and began to move to the foot of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge at Fort Wadsworth, on Staten Island, New York, in July 1981. The move was scheduled to take one month, but its staff did not finish transferring until the following January.

Originally, a New York congressman wanted old Fort Wadsworth to be turned into a national park, but two unforeseen events occurred: The congressman did not win re-election, and the old NAVRESSO Headquarters building was declared to be structurally unsound, forcing the organiza-



1981: NAVRESSO IN NEW YORK. From 1981 to 1991, the Navy Resale Services and Support Office's (NAVRESSO) headquarters buildings were located on Fort Wadsworth, Staten Island, New York. The commissary functions gradually transferred to DeCA in 1991, but the exchange functions remained at Staten Island under NEXCOM from June 1991 to September 1993. This aerial shot, taken in 1981, shows the close proximity of the headquarters buildings to the Verrazano Narrows Bridge. Military Market, Army Times Publications



tion to quickly relocate. The new location provided NAVRESSO with three buildings totaling more than 140,000 square feet of office space. In contrast, the Marine Corps Commissary Branch headquarters, located in the Commonwealth Building in Rosslyn, Virginia, had small but modern offices.

The Coast Guard's few commissaries were largely ignored during most of this activity, since they fell under the control of the Department of Transportation, not the Department of Defense.

COMMON PROBLEMS. DIFFERENT SOLUTIONS

After the completion of his commission's report, Bowers returned to TSA with a new agenda. The Army commissaries had to be reorganized into regional operations for centralized management. It was Bowers' unenviable task to sell Army people on this concept, reassuring them that post commanders were not going to lose control over their commissaries.

"It wasn't easy," Bowers would say a few years later. "The biggest concern theater and post commanders had was that they were going to lose the ability to assure the stores carried the items the service families wanted, and stay open at hours that were convenient. Once I was able to convince them they still would own the stores, and I was just going to run the stores for them, they were satisfied, though they were still skeptical until we got going." This mistrust wasn't limited to the Army; Maj. Gen. Daniel Burkett, the first AFCOMS commander, soon experienced exactly the same trouble with Air Force base commanders.

It would take a separate history to explain the points of view and the goals of every commissary system commander in the fifteen years from 1976 to 1991. A few of the more salient points, however, can be summarized here.

It must be remembered that each organization reflected the traits and concerns of its commanding officer. Naturally, the commander's concept of what areas should receive his primary focus were the areas stressed by their agencies.

TSA, 1974-88

Although at the local level there was opposition to centralization, it became clear that there were benefits to be had for the Troop Support Agency. The most obvious of these were improvements to the store facilities. The surcharge funds provided enough capital for the improvement of facilities in locations that never could have afforded new stores or renovations under the old system.

Throughout its existence, TSA was responsible for more than 296 commissary stores in twelve countries. Over the next sixteen years, the agency would build and open forty-six new stores and modify or repair nearly every store in the system. Some of them-notably, the new store

opened in 1985 at Fort Jackson, South Carolina—looked nothing like any commissary anyone had ever seen before. All of them compared favorably with their private-sector counterparts. These modern structures had adequate parking and were large, well-lit, and packed with thousands of line items. Many of them had fresh fish, bakeries, and delicatessens. It was the dawn of a new age in Army resale.

The other obvious improvement involved the workforce. In 1976, TSA employed more than ten thousand people in commissaries, yet initially few of them had any training or realistic hope for advancement. The creation of a professional standing for commissary employees (in particular, the civil service's 1144 series) would attract permanent employees who could have a lifetime career in the field, rather than transient workers who stayed with the commissaries only until they could find better-paying positions. Employees would receive training in the various phases of commissary management and operations. Service would improve, customers would be pleased, and happy customers meant more frequent buying. It was a formula for success.

Despite the advantages of centralization, there were problems. In 1982, an Army task force studied vendor difficulties in Europe and concluded that these were symptomatic of larger troubles in organizational structure and systems support.

The study recommended a reorganization to narrow the span of control, extend the existing data processing system to support store-level processing, and use a management-consulting firm for an in-depth review of the entire commissary system. As a result, the firm of Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co. of Washington, D.C., was retained to conduct the study of all five Army commissary regions. Its report, released in April 1983, stated that if all TSA elements had access to the same accurate information, the result would be reduced misunderstandings and dissatisfaction at the stores, warehouses, regions, and headquarters. Two decades later, the importance of timely and consistent data and communication is self-evident to all successful organizations.

The upper echelons of the armed forces did not always recognize it, but the commissary benefit was important enough to service families that any time they felt it was being threatened, the services and Congress were inundated with mail objecting to the loss of their promised benefit. The families believed they had been promised the benefit when they enlisted—and really, it was an entire family that enlisted, not just one individual-and if anyone was perceived as reneging on that promise, Congress heard about it.

Recognition wasn't a problem within the Troop Support Agency. In 1977, TSA began honoring its best commissaries. That first year, Brig. Gen. Emmett W. Bowers chose a single worldwide winner, with the honor going to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. In 1978 a formal evaluation was conducted by a special panel which selected Fort Sill again. Starting in 1985, this panel selected four winners, based on geographical locations and size, for the best large and small stores in the contiguous United States and overseas. TSA's best store awards were eventually named for Bill Nichols, one of the key congressmen who were strong defenders of the commissary benefit. (For complete listing of "Best Commissary" winners before 1991, see Appendix 14.)



1978: BAUMHOLDER, Germany. Customer Nancy Hines, shopping for a limited number of items, chooses some apples from the commissary's produce section. This store, built in 1978, was renovated in 1998 and is still in operation. TSA photo, DeCA historical file

In 1977, a new Panama Canal Treaty opened U.S. military commissaries on the isthmus to an influx of new customers. Some thirty-five hundred U.S. citizens employed by the Panama Canal Company, and their dependents, received military commissary shopping privileges. TSA added sixty-three people to the workforce to serve new customers at Corozal, Fort Gulick, Fort Kobbe, Howard Air Force Base, and Fort William Davis. In 1979, when the Panama Canal Commission replaced the Panama Canal Company, and the Canal Zone and its government were disestablished, the big PCC store at Balboa passed to TSA control until it closed in 1984.

In the 1980s, TSA's efforts at centralization included the development of core lists of key items in various categories: semi-perishable, dairy, and frozen. These lists were composed only of national name-brand products, all of which were mandatory for stores to stock. There were supplemental regional core lists for local preferences. Standard "store sets" were developed using these lists. Planograms (at the time spelled Plan-ograms) and store sets were plans that determined where items would be shelved. When local selection committees made their choices, different sets of predetermined planograms simplified the layout process.

TSA and AFCOMS together began to develop a European Central Distribution Center to provide better fill rates at European commissaries and enable both agencies to better manage their stock fund. In the states, TSA went with frequent delivery, which paid dividends through greater efficiency for distributors, improved inventory control, and more available time for sales representatives to review trends and present new ideas and products.

The District Oriented Store System (DOSS) in Europe was another inventory-management tool. On the cutting edge of what would soon become commonplace, it was

designed to mesh with front-end scanning systems.

Keeping shelves adequately stocked was a big priority for Brig. Gen. James E. Hayes, TSA commander from 1984-89. The not-in-stock (NIS) problem plagued commissaries, particularly those overseas. Since customers who constantly see empty shelves get discouraged and eventually shop elsewhere, the NIS issue was a major concern (see page 342). Hayes was serious about the problem, and it didn't matter to him where the problem lay; he would attack it. At an ALA meeting in April 1989, he announced to certain manufacturers that their vendor stocking at four particular stores was slipping, and they had thirty days to correct the problem or their items would be deleted. Somehow he had twisted

1980: WHITEMAN Air Force Base, Knob Noster, Missouri. Established in 1942 as Sedalia Army Air Field, this base had a commissary by 1948, and in 1957 opened a new store with fluorescent lighting and steam heat. Its replacement, An Air Force Design Merit Award winner, is shown here on opening day in September 1980. INSET: Whiteman's commissary officer in 1980 was Joe Merrick, pictured here wearing AFCOMS' controversial red coat. The coat was designed to help customers find management on the sales floor, but was an anathema to traditionalists who thought that active duty personnel wearing the coat were out of uniform. AFCOMS photos, DeCA historical file





their arms without offending them, and they obliged the general with minimal hard feelings. Hayes was determined to get the

shelves stocked and keep them that way, and was among the first to suggest closing a marginal operation if a newer, bigger store was in the vicinity.

Unknowingly, by 1988, the Troop Support Agency was making preparations to greet a new era. On May 6 of that year, the groundbreaking took place for a new TSA Headquarters building at Fort Lee, Virginia. When completed early in 1991, this

structure housed TSA as it was winding down. Later, in October 1991, it became the home for the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA).

AFCOMS, 1974-88

The Air Force Commissary Service (AFCOMS) was governed by a board of directors that answered to the Air Force chief of staff. AFCOMS was officially activated in January 1976 and was activated onsite at its headquarters at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas, in April. By October of that year, AFCOMS assumed control of almost all Air Force commissaries. Its first official customer was Joyce I. Kerin of Andersen Air Force Base, Guam. Andersen was the first store west of the international dateline, and thus was the first AFCOMS store to open every morning.

Maj. Gen. Daniel L. Burkett, AFCOMS'

first commander, found himself stumping around the world—just as the Army's Bowers had done the year before—convincing manders at Air Force bases that centralization was indeed going to benefit them.

Frank E. Derby, who first served as executive assistant to the AFCOMS commander, and later became deputy to the commander, assisted Burkett in choosing key personnel for the new organiza-

tion. Of those first days, he later recalled, "General Burkett and I visited every major command ... and we told them what we were going to do ... and we had other

people visit the numbered Air Forces. We stayed on the road constantly trying to tell people what we were going to do ... and every commissary officer that we talked to was tickled to death. Because for the first time [a commissary officer] realized he was going to have a career program, he was going to have a path to get out of the dead end he was in, and if he did well he was

Maj. Gen. Daniel L. Burkett



Frank Derby

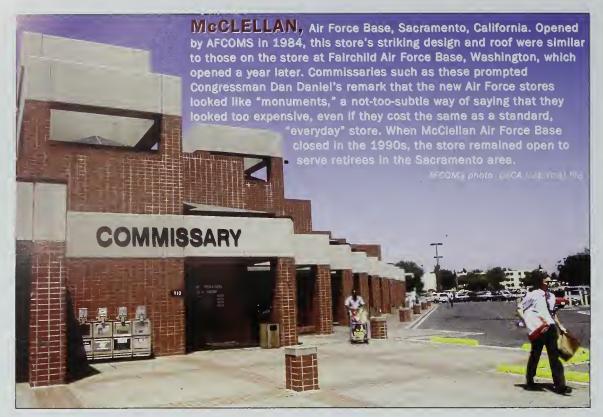
going to be recognized ... I think on a scale of one to ten, the morale went from about a two to a nine, really quickly."

AFCOMS also noticed that their workforce in the stores was aging: "The average age of the commissary officers in those days was fifty-seven years. You can't run an organization of that size with that kind of average age. So we put young promising people up [in positions of responsibility] very quickly."

Like the Troop Support Agency, AFCOMS had responsibilities beyond those of operating sales commissaries. Its primary mission was that of troop support. The commissary mission, while important to supporting military families and boosting troop morale, helped the agency prepare for wartime contingencies. These preparations included maintaining storage facilities worldwide and pre-positioning rations and subsistence for troop support

> and troop issue. On any given day there were vessels on the high seas carrying rations and foodstuffs, and, in times of emergency, these ships could be diverted to new destinations.

> AFCOMS had a special office for troop support operations and dealt extensively in providing Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) as well as troop issue facilities. AFCOMS provided subsis-



tence support for combat troops during the Grenada operation of 1983, when four of its sergeants established and operated a tactical field exchange on the island of Barbados. The agency had already planned on building an emergency operations center (EOC), and it was now able to use lessons learned from the Grenada operation for future troop support missions. The EOC, placed in the basement of AFCOMS headquarters, would function as a worldwide communications facility in time of crisis or natural disaster. It first saw real-world use during operations in the Persian Gulf (1990-1991) when the Air Force Commissary Service supplied hundreds of thousands of MREs and other rations to troops in the Middle East. It also helped train exchange personnel to operate tactical field exchanges (TFEs).

To supplement its troop support mission, AFCOMS conducted courses, field exercises, and competitions to prepare its uniformed personnel for wartime activity. This training included the Air Force's first contingency operations and Prime RIBS (readiness in base services) course, which began at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, in the early 1980s, and the Prime FARE (food and readiness) Rodeo competition.

(The latter was called a rodeo because it was held in Texas—specifically, at the training facility at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. Instead of horses, competitors used forklifts.)

AFCOMS also provided rations and TFE support for Prime BEEF (base engineering emergency force) training for Air Force civil engineers.

In the event of war, the services would

follow the same plan: commissaries in conflict areas would evacuate civilian staff, both American and local nationals, to be replaced by military troop supply specialists. Store inventory could be used to support combat troops. At that point, each service's policies diverged: the Army's and the Marines' combat-area stores would become food depots, and Navy stores would become part of

food-service operations. The Air Force was different in that its subsistence division would function under the direction of its commissary agency, AFCOMS.

All four services stocked and maintained sufficient war-reserve materials such as Meals, Ready-to-Eat (MREs) for troop feeding in maneuvers and wartime. The Air Force was unique in that its commissary agency had that responsibility, and its commissary officers (including civilian commissary officers in Europe) were trained in wartime responsibilities, including how to interact with their base and food services. This would facilitate a transition from peacetime to wartime functions.

The Air Force rapidly took on more responsibility following the formation of AFCOMS. In October 1978, for example, the agency took over the Army's perishable subsistence depot on Okinawa and managed subsistence support and all commissary stores on the island, although most of the bases there belonged to other services.

This development was one of several tradeoffs; for example, the Army continued to operate the commissary at Howard Air Force Base in Panama.

Beginning in 1983, scanners and computerized inventory methods were adopted at many AFCOMS locations. In 1984 came the establishment of the service's European and Pacific Region Defense Data Network connections. In 1986,

AFCOMS contracted for the Air Force Minicomputer Multiuser System (AMMUS). This initiated the organization's worldwide computer system and provided quick communications with little delay. This explosion of computer technology fit right along with what Maj. Gen. M. Gary Alkire, the AFCOMS commander in 1986, thought about computers: "When I got here [in 1986], there was a philosophy on



Maj. Gen. M. Gary Alkire

part of the staff that said, 'I never had it before and I don't need it now.' Since computers were obviously the wave of the future, we had to somehow change that mindset." As a trained engineer, Alkire was well aware of the potential of computers. The transition to computers was made with minimal fuss, so it seems he

had the proper combination of knowledge and persuasive personality necessary for implementing such a fundamental change.

For interoffice and intercommand communications, AFCOMS put WANG computers into the commissaries to give the stores a computer capability, including email, word processing, and interconnection through the Defense Data Network. Alkire recalled that in some stores employees could hardly wait to get the computers out of the box and learn how to use them. In other stores, employees were content to keep the computers in their boxes, unused, until Alkire prodded them to trust, as he put it, that the machines "wouldn't break, and it was something they could use productively."

Alkire and those who could see what the future could bring overcame their attitudes about technology, but some gave in only grudgingly and gradually. Checkout scanning, however, using the NCR 9300, was accepted fairly readily, probably because most employees had seen it in use in the private sector. "We bought a standard scanning package from industry, rather than develop one of our own," Alkire said. "But we developed the operating system, the inventory system, and the financial system because there weren't any industry systems out there that would work in the government environment."

Ultimately, AFCOMS ironed out its hardware problems, including antiquated telephone wiring in old buildings that caused the system to crash fairly often in its early days. Eventually, most skeptics were won over.

As AFCOMS began to embrace new technology, it also opened its arms to more employees. It eventually employed ten thousand civilian workers and twelve-hundred military. By 1991, of a total of 145 stores in operation, 88 were new facilities that had opened since 1976. Of those, a dozen received Air Force "Design Merit" awards. Walt Winters, head of AFCOMS' engineering directorate, always maintained that it cost no more to build a futuristic or an attractive facility, because that wasn't where the expense lay; the expense was in



AFCOMS TROOP SUPPORT, 1980s, AFCOMS'

Capt. Robert I. Volavchek and Tech Sgt. Charles "Chuck" Jolly (above photo) check stock during a troop support exercise, probably at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, in 1981. Note that the crescent moon, the military's official symbol for subsistence ever since it was officially adopted as the insignia for commissary sergeants in 1873, is prominent on every box. Air Force personnel (right photo) at the Joint Detention Center in **Grenada during Operation Urgent Fury** in 1983. The officer on the right is eating an MRE (Meals, Ready to Eat) provided by the Air Force Commssary Service (AFCOMS).

U.S. Air Force photos, DeCA historical file

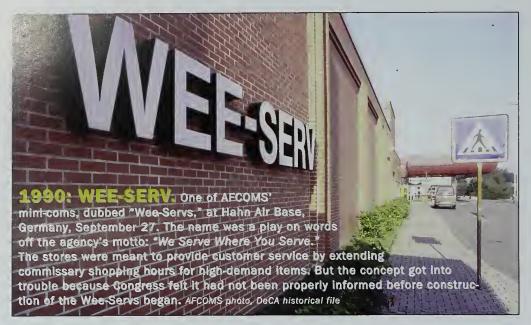


the operating equipment for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), and the freezers and coolers. In fact, some modernistic designs could have saved energy dollars through improved air circulation.

However, there were those (in Congress and elsewhere) who felt some facilities were "monuments" that gave the impression that too much money was being spent on glitz over substance. A store that critics cited in particular was the new Norton Air Force Base, California, commissary; its architecture made it look space-age and extravagant (see photo, page 284).

In response, AFCOMS would spend just as much money on its stores, but the look of the commissaries would not be so spectacular. They would, instead, be designed to blend in with the existing architectural themes on each base.

The Air Force expanded store hours for six- and seven-day shopping at sixty-four stores. In January 1985, the first Wee-Serv opened in conjunction with the opening of a new store at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. "Wee-Serv" was a play on words,



using AFCOMS' motto: "We Serve Where You Serve."

The Wee-Servs were much like the minicoms run by the Troop Support Agency and had plenty of historical precedent, since they resembled what in earlier years would have been called annexes or branches. The stores offered a scaled-down selection of what the main store stocked, at the same prices, but at different hours; they were open when the big store wasn't.

Alkire was concerned about providing customer service on a shrinking budget. The commander understood that excellent customer service kept people returning to the stores. Without patrons, the benefit would die. "Nobody joins the Air Force to shop in the commissary or the exchange. ... but they stay in the service ... because of what those benefits contribute to a total package," he said.

Alkire saw Wee-Servs as a matter of convenience. The whole point was to be of service to the customers, and Wee Servs did that by extending shopping hours without going to the expense of keeping an entire store open. "We have got to keep up with the times, and the times today call for flashlights and batteries and convenience shopping." But the Wee-Servs came under fire. AFCOMS had not received specific congressional approval to use construction funds for such a purpose, a fact that upset even the commissaries' champions in the House, Dan Daniel and Bill Nichols.

Another controversy began in 1986, when Air Force commissary officers and store managers, even those in uniform, were permitted to wear distinctive red jackets. Although this wardrobe decision bothered some traditionalists, the point was to make management easy to spot on a crowded commissary floor. The Army had a similar program with its managers wearing golden coats. Whatever the color, the goal was customer service, and in that, both services succeeded.

In its brief fifteen years, AFCOMS twice received the Air Force Organizational Excellence Award (for 1976-79 and 1985-86), as well as the service's Outstanding Unit Award for 1981-83. But as good as AFCOMS was at receiving awards, it was even better at recognizing its people. Starting in 1977, awards were presented at an annual banquet to best commissaries and best departments. From 1986 to 1991, the Dan Daniel awards—named for Congressman Dan Daniel, an ardent commissary supporter-went to the three best enlisted commissary specialists, worldwide.

It was under Alkire that a number of initiatives, long in the making, were fulfilled. The building program continued with fresh interest from the commander, who was a trained engineer. He stressed education for all store employees, and training programs took a quantum leap forward. AFCOMS' scanning system, known as ACOS (for Automated Commissary Operating System) was initiated during his watch.

Although the agency had started with four regions, it later established fifteen complexes and added other regional offices for increased local control. By the time AFCOMS was disestablished in 1991, the agency had eleven regions, four overseas and seven in the United States.

NRSO AND NAVRESSO. 1974-1988

Following the release of the Bowers Report, there was little the Navy commissaries had to change. They were already far ahead of the Army and Air Force in terms of commissary organization, having long before placed control of their commissaries under a central office.

That organization was in the form of the Navy Ship's Store Office (NSSO), which became the Navy Resale Support Office, or NRSO, in 1969. (On rare occasions it was referred to as NAVRESO, with one S.)

When it came to technology, the Navy had been the first of the services to employ the technology offered by the Universal Product Code (UPC) and scanning. Navy commissaries also pioneered the use of frequent delivery, civilian distributors, and the "Chek Robot" system of self-checkouts. In 1991, self-checkouts had been ahead of their time and had a few too many problems that made them impractical, but by 2004, commissaries were once again experimenting with the concept. (By the time of this book's publication in 2008, their future was assured.)

In part because it had been centralized years earlier (in 1946, as NSSO), and thus had a head start on the other services, the Navy became the first of the services to use checkout scanners in its commissaries. In December 1975, the commissary at Mitchel Field, New York, was the first to try the new technology. This was little more than a year since the first civilian scanners went into operation. Eventually, scanning would be commonplace in commissaries of all the services, but it took well over a decade to accomplish. Like everything else the commissaries had ever adopted from the civilian sector, it took a while for all commissaries to



A NAVY FAMILY leaves the commissary at Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, in the early 1980s. Navy stores during this period were run by the Navy Resale and Systems Support Office (NAVRESSO). NAVRESSO photo, DeCA historical file

benefit from the new technology.

In 1979, NRSO became the Navy Resale and Services Support Office (NAVRES-SO), when the central office was renamed after being assigned new responsibilities in the field of textile and uniform research. The following year, the commissary operating group replaced the commissary stores division. In 1981, NAVRESSO moved from its old headquarters in Brooklyn to Fort Wadsworth on Staten Island.

Three years after its creation, NAVRES-SO tested the sale of cigarettes and soft drinks at Naval Station Charleston and Naval Weapons Station Charleston, South Carolina. NAVRESSO commissary management specialist Linda Lewis later recalled that in 1982, only four other Navy commissaries sold tobacco and soft drinks; all other Navy commissaries left those sales to the Navy exchanges. The four exceptions were the commissaries at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; Naval Station Guam (Agana); Naval Station Atsugi, Japan; and Chinhae, Korea, where there was no Navy Exchange. After the test was over, NAVRESSO decided to let things remain as they were; NAVRESSO did not want one side of its house to compete with the other. This situation remained unchanged for eight years. Only in the summer of 1991, in the months just prior to consolidation into DeCA, did Navy commissaries begin to sell those commodities, moving away from the NAVRES-SO way of doing business.

The Navy's commissary system was somewhat complicated by the fact that its commissaries were under the same umbrella as its exchanges, and it was generally perceived (though never proven or quantified) that the commissaries, which were an appropriated fund activity, suffered some neglect as a result, since the were exchanges "money-making" side of the house. The Navy used complexes, regions and field support offices (FSOs) for administration and

procuring goods from DPSC for Navy commissaries in the United States. Most overseas stores (called "offshore locations") did their own procurement. The number of complexes, regions and FSOs had grown to ten before the Navy's stores were consolidated with those of the other services in 1991.

In 1983, NAVRESSO introduced a frequent delivery system to its stores in San Diego. Two years later, frequent delivery was being used at the Navy's central distribution center in Newport, Rhode Island. Soon, the Newport CDC began shipments to Naval Station Argentia, Newfoundland, three times monthly via the government contract carrier. By October 1988, the Navy's frequent delivery system had grown to encompass forty-one stores in the continental United States and seven overseas.

As of 1985, Navy commissaries employed thirty-seven hundred civilian and military personnel. On each base or station the resale officer-in-charge (ROIC) became responsible for daily operations of exchanges and commissaries. The base-level ROICs were usually the exchange officers. A commissary store manager reported to



1982: LITTLE CREEK.

The store was in Building 3324 at Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, Virginia. Built in 1966, it had twenty-one checkouts, a fish market, and 29,900 square feet of sales area. One innovative feature was a customer service window that operated inside and out. Advancements in the grocery business soon rendered the store outmoded. A new facility replaced it in 1993.

Photos: Military Market, Army Times Publications



ROIC, who in turn reported to both RESSO and the local commander.

3 this time Navy commissaries, like

Reir Army and Air Force counterparts, charged a 5-percent surcharge across the board to cover nonlabor costs. The Navy stores claimed a 24-percent patron savings, comparable to that of the Army's Troop Support Agency, the Air Force Commissary Service, and the Marine Corps Services' Commissary Branch.

In the late 1980s, Navy resale activities began doing business with the Coast Guard. In May

1987, NAVRESSO and the Coast Guard signed an interservice support agreement under which the Navy would provide logistic, administrative, and financial support to Coast Guard commissary and exchange locations. The Navy's Newport central distribution center started shipping line items and frequent delivery products carried by Coast Guard stores. NAVRES-SO also assumed management of the Coast Guard commissary on Governors Island, New York.

NAVRESSO instituted a commissary mobility program for its civilian employees in 1985. It became a condition of employment that an 1144 series worker, GS-8 through GS/GM-14, had to agree to move, if so required, on ninety days notice. Navy people objected, but since the Army and Air Force were already doing it, there was little chance of avoiding it.

In 1987, Rear Adm. Donald Wilson retired, ending six productive years with the Navy resale system. During that time

> the Navy had developed and implemented several successful business strategies. NAVRESSO had implemented fast pay procedures in the commissary program. The procedures reduced interest payments by 90 percent and captured 94 percent of available cash discounts. In five years, these procedures had yielded over \$6 million in additional funds, which went toward supporting commissary improvements.

Without additional funding, NAVRES-SO had also doubled the number of line items available at commissaries while expanding commissary hours by an average of almost four hours per store per week. Because of this greater convenience, sales increased by 20 percent.

When Navy commissaries were eventually absorbed into the Defense Commissary Agency in 1991, the remnants—the Navy exchanges, Navy lodges, and ships' stores-were transferred to NAVRESSO's successor, the Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM).

MARINE CORPS SERVICES COMMISSARY BRANCH, 1974-88

The Marine Corps, with the fewest commissaries of the four major services, was able to do more with less. Unfettered by enormous overseas pipelines, huge numbers of customers and employees, or anything resembling a large headquarters organization, the Marines were able to function efficiently by letting the bases run their own stores with a minimum of guidance from the top.

In the 1970s the headquarters for Marine Corps commissaries was located in the Services Division at Marine Corps Headquarters in Rosslyn, Virginia. Having only a dozen stores, the Marines opted to use a decentralized approach. There were only two commissary specialists at the headquarters, and while they set overall commissary policy, the daily implementation of that policy was actually accomplished by commissary officers and each installation's commanding officer. Vendors wishing to do business with the commissaries made in-person presentations to the commissary officers of the individual stores rather than to someone at headquarters.

Col. H. G. Fischer, head of the Marines' Services Division in 1974, wrote that "the commander on the scene can best respond to the desires of the patrons that his facility is supporting ... ensuring that the products ... are in fact responsive to the needs of the particular patrons that happen to be at that facility. We feel very strongly that commissary stores represent a chief factor in enhancing the lives of our uniformed Marines." The Marines truly appreciated the benefit, said Walter Cooper, Fischer's assistant. "I have been told by numerous personnel ... that they would never have made the military a career without the commissary benefit."

John A. Davis, chief of the Marines' Commissary Branch in 1974, asserted, "This decentralized system has been very responsive to the needs of individual activities. ... Satisfaction of the customer is the basic aim for all items carried in stock."

Building new facilities was the area in which the Marines were falling behind the other services' commissaries. The solution was to increase the variable surcharge from 4 to 5 percent, and eventually as much as 6 percent, using a per-item surcharge rather than a flat charge across the board. The extra money was used specifically for con-



Rear Adm. Donald E. Wilson



1983: MOBILE, Alabama. An employee stocks the meat case at the new store at Mobile, one of the Coast Guard's fifteen exchanges that included a commissary section. Most of these sections were every bit as large as entire commissaries owned by the other services; Mobile's had 15,000 square feet. Military Market, Army Times Publications



struction and renovation. In 1983, when the surcharge was standardized for all services at 5 percent, the Marines wondered where their construction funds would come from.

Before 1979, all the Marine Corps stores did their own buying. In 1979-80, the Marine Corps became the first of the services to begin phasing in complexes to manage groups of commissaries. The concept was to use as few people as possible to run the stores—ordering, purchasing, stocking, and selling—by cutting down on managerial and administrative positions. Once established, the complexes reported directly to the commissary branch of the Marine Corps Services office, which was already making policy, reviewing operations, conducting inspections, and participating in joint service meetings for exchanging ideas on methodology and procedures.

There were two complexes, one on each coast. Each had a central office or lead store where most of the paperwork was handled.

The West Coast Complex office, along with a centralized warehousing and distribution center, was located at Marine Corps Air Station El Toro, California. The complex was established on schedule in October 1980 despite the necessary computers being delivered only thirteen days previously. Three years later, the Marines activated the East Coast

complex at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Cecil Saunders, branch chief from 1979-84, recalled years later, "Marine Corps commanders didn't want to give up control of their stores, and we prided ourselves in being responsive to the desires of each local

> commander. The Marine stores remained, pretty much, independent entities. But complex officers worked for us at the headquarters, and certain procedures were standardized." Saunders' successor, Joe Jeu (1984-87) agreed, remembering, "I was head of commissary policy, direction and changes, and I had command and control over the complex directors. But I



Cecil Saunders



had no direct control of the commissaries themselves."

There were about fifty people in each complex organization, handling procurement/purchasing, accounting, the management information system, and the distribution center at each complex. Installation commanders were expected to enforce management regulations and policy directives that had been determined and provided by USMC headquarters, but the stores were considered the commanders' personal responsibility.

Patrick Nixon, a former Marine working for the Army's Troop Support Agency in 1983, became the Marine Corps commissary program manager in 1988. He found the sheer difference in size between the Army and Marine Corps systems a blessing, because the Marines' stores were far more manageable.

Nixon later recalled, "In TSA you had a support manual, which was volumes of rules and regulations for how to do business in the Army Troop Support Agency. Everything you did was covered in that manual, which attempted to cover every possible circumstance or situation. But the Marine Corps had a tiny book, and the whole book wasn't even about commissaries; it had to do with running resale and MWR operations. You were expected to make good business decisions, and they didn't bind you with a lot of rules and regulations." Long before it was in vogue, Nixon managed budget authority, he had payroll authority, and he had classification authority. Nixon didn't have to go to a classifier if he wanted to change a job; he was able to change it himself.

The Marines also had what many regarded as the most advanced business system of all four services: the Commissary Management Information System (CMIS). "To this day," Nixon says now, "we don't have a business system as sophisticated as that was. We didn't pay a bill if it didn't match to the penny, and we bought on purchase orders, not standing contracts. Every order was a purchase order. You paid for what you received, the same day that you received it, and you matched it to the penny."

Ultimately, when the Jones Commission

examined the commissaries at the end of the decade, the commission wanted the new agency to emulate the Marine Corps model. The problem was the size of the organizations involved. While the Marines had just over a dozen commissaries, the consolidated commissary agency would have more than four hundred. Unfortunately, Marine Corps systems and methodology did not translate into reality with an organization that was nearly forty times as large.

"In the Marine Corps," Nixon recalls, "some of the things we did were a little bit different: we were advertising on the sides of trucks, on paper bags, on register tapes, long before that was the fashion. We were doing slotting fees, which is what civilian retail does. Nowadays, the GAO makes sure the government doesn't do that, but back then, it was allowed, and the Marines did it and took every opportunity to get additional money, to save money for the patrons."

Because of changing rules as well as its sheer size, the Defense Commissary Agency has been unable to match the levels of autonomy, accountability, responsibility, business support, and retail orientation the Marines had attained in 1988-89. Conversely, the one problem the Marines could not overcome was a function of their small size: They could not put together enough funding to replace their old, obsolete stores. Ultimately, this shortcoming was the biggest reason the Marines supported commissary consolidation: DeCA would enable them to "build out" their construction needs in just a few years.

SHARED TRENDS, **SHARED BOARD**

Although the commissary agencies worked for separate services, had separate procedures, and adhered to different regulations, they encountered the same trends. For instance, as time passed, the agencies lost military personnel slots. More civilians staffed the stores, from bottom to top, and more stores began acquiring civilian commissary officers and store managers. Not all of them were Americans, either. Foreign employees were gradually being entrusted with more responsibilities. The first known foreign national store manager was Vicente Diaz, appointed store manager of the commissary at Torrejon Air Base, Spain, in 1981. He had certainly earned the position, having worked there since 1956.

From 1976 to 1991, constant scrutiny placed the commissary benefit in jeopardy, and all the agencies were concerned whether they would be allowed to continue their mission. The biggest threat was posed by the Grace Commission in 1983-85. Another source of worry was the government's determination to cut spending. In particular, the Gramm-Rudman Act of December 11, 1985, was passed in an attempt to end the substantial federal deficit and achieve a balanced budget by 1991. Because of the effect this legislation had on hundreds of federal programs, political infighting tended to delay the passage of the government's budget. At the end of 1987, the commissaries were actually operating under continuing resolutions that kept the military and other govern-





ment functions financed, but they operated for months without a budget for 1988.

At the time, it seemed the only immediate option the commissaries had was to reduce their hours. NAVRESSO's Rear Adm. Rodney K. Squibb described it in naval terms: "The handwriting is on the bulkhead. We're going to squeeze the hours back." Marine Brig. Gen. Michael P. Downs, director of the Marine Corps' facilities and services division, which provided oversight for the Marine Corps commissaries, didn't want to reduce anything. "Improved service equates to greater hours ... the only way you can do that is by getting more people working," he said.

Because the essentials of their missions were the same, the agencies worked together whenever it proved mutually advantageous. Probably the most noteworthy methods of cooperation were the formations of a Joint Services Commissary Committee (JSCC) and the DoD Commissary Executive Board. Starting in 1977, the JSCC compared notes, strategies, and methodologies.

AFCOMS' Bill Moran later recalled that initially the committee was formed "at the director of operations level and began meeting together quarterly ... establishing rapport among ourselves, establishing some kind of uniformity in operating procedures, sharing information."

By 1979, the commanders of the commissary services would attend the meetings' last day. Moran considered the JSCC "one of the major achievements of the commissary system in the past ten years." The Commissary Executive Board, formed by the office of the assistant secretary of defense in October 1980, met quarterly. It was a policymaking group empowered to set goals, evaluate performance, and provide guidance to the services as they operated their commissary systems.

REGIONS AND COMPLEXES

The immensity of their operations, spread over thousands of miles, made the Navy, Army, and Air Force commissary operations too unwieldy to be easily managed from one headquarters. Therefore they each devised a scheme of geographical regions to add a local layer of control. The Troop Support Agency established five regions, while the Navy Resale Systems Office had eleven field support offices, complexes, and regions. The Air Force Commissary Service initially had four regions, a number that increased to eleven. Like its Navy counterparts, AFCOMS established complexes within the regions as a means of furthering local control.

The services experimented with complexes to provide close-in support for the stores. Essentially, a group of stores in the same geographical area would be organized into a complex in which most of the administrative positions would be held by the lead or hub store. This concept was pioneered by the Marine Corps' two complexes in 1979.

'BUYING POWER,' FUNDING, SAVINGS, AND SURCHARGE

Despite differences in the way the services did business, their commissary organizations had common problems. Centralization solved many of them: funding, personnel, construction and renovation, new store designs, and buying power. "We were speaking for an enormous market," AFCOMS' first commander, Maj. Gen.

Daniel Burkett remarked years later. "We found at headquarters we could deal with vendors much more effectively. ... They'd come in and say, 'You know, we've got a special run on catsup. ... we think you ought to order so many of these things at such and such a price.' And we were able to go back and say, 'We'll take your entire production, but you're going to have to drop the price, like about 25 cents a bottle.' Their eyes opened up and they went back [to consult with their colleagues], and they'd come back in a couple of hours and say, 'Okay!' We couldn't have achieved those types of savings [without centralization]."

Years later, Army Brig. Gen. James S. Hayes of TSA would affirm the power that centralization had given the commissaries: "In the old days ... industry would go to [large posts such as] Fort Bragg or Fort Hood and Fort Benning because they were our big volume stores. But they would be very reticent to go to a Fort Irwin or to a Yuma or a Dugway or a store off the beaten path, because it was not profitable or beneficial to them to call on a small store."

Burkett recalled an incident at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, where the service planned to build a new store with funds made available from centralization. There was some debate about whether or not they would get enough customers to make the expense worthwhile. Customer counts at the old store were low. But along came a local grocery store strike that lasted a few days, and suddenly the line to get in the old commissary wound around the store. "All that tells you," Burkett explained, "is that there were many people that should be shopping there on a regular basis, that [instead], for one reason or another avoided

Commissaries in the United Kingdom: 'CHEERIO!'

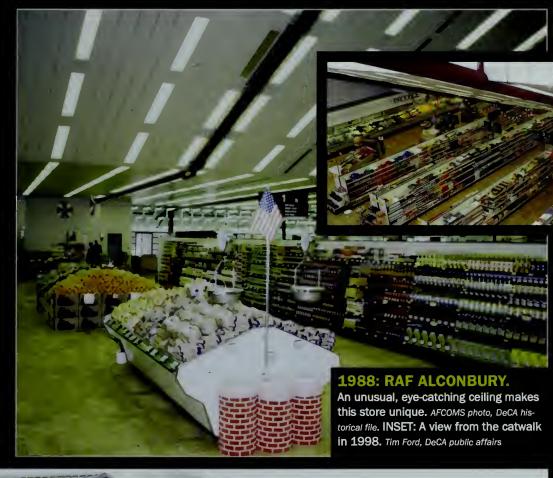
ORLD WAR II necessitated huge numbers of American military personnel to be sent to Great Britain, where they were stationed all over the country, at dozens of different bases. There were swarms of Army and Navy personnel in and around port cities, and the Army Air Forces had aircraft crews by the thousands scattered at Royal Air Force bases throughout the United Kingdom. The Americans' presence seemed ubiquitous, and the attention the young American service men lavished on the ladies of the United Kingdom prompted many an Englishman to note, dryly, ruefully, and often accurately, that the Americans were "Overpaid, oversexed, and over here."

The American presence did not end with the war. When the United States committed itself to helping maintain Europe's postwar stability, large numbers of uniformed Americans remained. As the Cold War progressed, most Americans in the UK were Air Force personnel stationed at RAF bases, but there were large numbers of sailors, as well, at several naval facilities.

Americans were stationed in at least thirty-five different locations throughout the UK from the late 1940s through the 1970s.

Since a duty assignment in the British Isles was an accompanied tour that was highly attractive to families, most of the American bases had a commissary, an exchange, or both to provide for their personnel and their families.

As time passed, the numbers of bases and personnel gradually dropped, until by 2007 there were only nine locations hosting either a commissary, an exchange, or a central distribution center.







1961: RAF BENTWATERS. A meat department worker points out the benefits of "marbling" in a cut of beef. Overseas, most employees were local nationals.

Military Market, Army Times Publications



1986: RAF CHICKSANDS. One of the second generation of new stores following World War II, this store was built in 1969 and was heavily renovated in the mid-1980s. It tied (with Torrejon Air Base, Spain) for AFCOMS' "Best Store, Europe," in 1987.

AFCOMS photo, DeCA historical file

the store." Burkett believed this was because it was an obsolete store: "It had narrow aisles, and very little display space. ... you know, it's almost a guarantee that as soon as you build an adequate, modern shopping facility, the sales are going to increase rapidly. ... [Then] brokers, delighted, offer us more assistance, and more savings."

Centralized control had to be used carefully. It had the potential to cause resentment on the part of both the installation commander and the commissary officer, who were used to doing things their own way. In 1989, AFCOMS' Maj. Gen. Charles E. Woods, who had retired several years previously, spoke with Dick Maness, a region director, in the store at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. When Woods inquired about a brand of soap that he personally preferred for shaving, Maness acknowledged that he and his commissary officers could not order certain items. Maness told Woods that the people who read the computer printouts

called the soap a "slow mover" and repeatedly denied the local requests. There were ways around this quandary, but it usually required special orders, and customers had to be willing to purchase more of the product than they wanted.

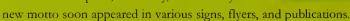
Burkett agreed the only place to determine requirements was at the store level, because customers eat differently around the world. "You send a military guy to Texas, and it's not very long before he starts eating a lot of chili and enchiladas. But you send

MOTTOS AND SEALS

Commissary Symbols Trumpet Service Identity

HREE OF THE FOUR services' commissary organizations adopted mottos and seals between 1976 and 1991. The U.S. Army's Troop Support Agency was the first to do so, although its first seal was unofficial. It listed TSA's various functions and depicted a globe and silhouettes of military personnel, symbolizing the agency's worldwide mission.

In February 1981, TSA sponsored a contest to adopt a motto, and selected "Serving the Most Deserving" as the winning entry. It had been submitted by Richard J. Highsmith, a meatcutter at the Fort Campbell, Kentucky, commissary. The



When a new official seal was adopted in 1986, the slogan would be a major component. The 1986 seal was the first and only TSA seal to receive official approval and endorsement from the U.S. Army's Institute of Heraldry. It consisted of a knight's helmet, a globe, and a bundle of wheat, rendered in red, gold, and blue. Those colors tradi-



tionally signified the U.S. Army, as well as its logistics and transportation activities. The bundle of wheat symbolized TSA's food program and commissary activities, the globe symbolized the agency's worldwide mission, and the helmet represented the soldiers served by TSA.

The Air Force Commissary Service (AFCOMS) seal, adopted in 1977, depicted the

functions performed by the agency. In the center, the globe represents AFCOMS' worldwide mission. The fruit spilling from the cornucopia,

and the wheat encircling the globe, represented the provision of food for resale and troop issue/subsistence. Provision of wholesome merchandise was symbolized by the white cloud. The wings represented service to the Air Force. The blue background and border represented the sky, the primary theater of



Air Force operations. The specific origins of the slogan, "We Serve Where You Serve," are, unfortunately, currently unknown.

AFCOMS also produced several seals for their Prime FARE training; one showed the Smart Owl on a forklift; the other, utilized after the owl lost favor, used the more traditional Eagle, with eleven stars symbolizing each AFCOMS region.

The seal of the Navy Resale and Services Support Office (NAVRESSO) was initially adopted in 1946 by the Navy Resale System Office (NRSO). The two seals are exactly alike except for the organization name. Both portrayed the American Bald Eagle perched on an

anchor; this was a traditional symbol used in the official Navy seal itself. Both also included the stylized rope on the perimeter that is common to the Navy and Marine Corps seals. The seals were portrayed in differ-



ent colors, including blue & buff, blue & whiter, and blue, white, & gold. The anchor remains today in the seal of the Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM).

More familiar to NAVRESSO customers and personnel than the command seal was a version localized for region and store use.

Bearing the names of the stores in a particular

region or complex, it was white and blue, with a full-color cornucopia, anchor, and shopping cart (similar to a cart used later by DeCA). Similarly, while the Marine Corps Commissary Office never adopted a special seal, some Marine commissaries used a shoulder patch that displayed the name of their location in a band surrounding the official USMC seal; no



doubt, it said everything the Marines believed needed to be said.

him to England, and he's going to start eating more of the type of food they serve over there. He still wants some of that Mexican food, but his daily menu changes in accordance to where he's stationed." This problem—having a clientele with tastes for food from around the world—was one that few civilian markets faced.

Price comparison surveys were conducted by each service several times each year. In order for a base to keep its commissary, it had to show a 20-percent savings over nearby civilian Throughout markets. the 1970s and 1980s, all services managed to maintain average savings

between 20 and 28 percent. The surcharge, meanwhile, was made a uniform 5 percent for all services in 1983. Variable pricing for the Navy and the Marines was discontinued, causing some consternation, especially among the Marines; the small percentage shift in surcharge could make a big difference in a small system, possibly causing the Marines to lose one of their projected new stores.

SURVEYS AND STUDIES

Between 1980 and 1983, four major surveys confirmed the value, both real and perceived, of the commissary benefit. Three of these, which surveyed nearly thirty-five thousand active-duty personnel around the world, found that the commissaries were regarded as one of the most important military benefits, second only to medical care. (In later years, as medical benefits declined, commissaries sometimes hit the top of the list.)

These surveys were a 1980 Hay Associates study for DoD; a 1983 Army Soldier Survey; and a 1983 Council House Research Survey for the American Logis-



JOINT SERVICES Commissary Committee meeting, April 1984: Attendees of a JSCC meeting at Fort Lee, Virginia. Seated, from left: Frank D. Derby (representing AFCOMS), Adm. Donald E. Wilson (NAVRESSO), Brig. Gen. James S. Hayes (TSA), Marine Brig. Gen. Lewis H. Buehl, Navy Capt. Alan J. Nissalke (Defense Personnel Support Center). Standing: Paul McCarthy (TSA), Nicholas A. Giannone (NAVRESSO), Hugh M. Hodges, Jr. (TSA), Bill Moran (AFCOMS), Ed Thompson (NAVRESSO), Army Col. N. J. Craddock, Cecil Saunders (Marines), Charles E. "Chuck" Fulmore (TSA), and Ed Pickett (NAVRESSO). DeCA historical file, courtesy Cecil Saunders

tics Association. A fourth survey, conducted for the Army by American University, was a market basket study of five commissaries and five comparable supermarkets in the Washington, D.C. area. It found the commissary prices were 22.6 to 30.6 percent below the supermarket price.

Of course, some remained unconvinced. If there was a constant from 1950 to 2000, it was the frequency of repeated studies concerning the benefit and the manner in which it was being delivered. These studies were sometimes initiated by people who wished to disprove previous reports.

DoD VERSUS GAO

Even before the Bowers Report had been released, a General Accounting Office (GAO) report in April 1975 recommended discontinuation of all commissaries in the metropolitan area. The report caused a furor, but it went nowhere. The GAO erred by ignoring the need for commissaries at duty stations in high cost-of-living urban areas, where the benefit was vital to enlisted families.

Most studies and reports released late in the 1970s and the early 1980s were friendly to the stores and appreciative of their goals and efforts. In 1976 the Third Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation indicated the value of the commissaries, both real and perceived, was greater than the government cost.

In January 1980, another negative GAO report drew a bristling response from DoD. It was especially irritating to Robert B. Pirie Jr., the assistant secretary of defense for manpower, reserve affairs, and logistics, because the report had brushed off or ignored the objections

and comments DoD had made to the draft report several months previously. DoD responded with a written rebuttal, to which Pirie attached an accompanying letter to the comptroller general, Elmer B. Staats. DoD insisted the GAO had rehashed its own previous reports and ignored commissary management im-provements: "The report contains several factual errors, partial truths, unsubstantiated assumptions and erroneous conclusions. It is rhetorically biased, advocating a GAO opinion concerning the DoD commissary system which ignores the adverse impact on the morale and welfare of United States military personnel."

Several themes to which DoD took strong exception had run throughout both the draft and final reports. GAO persisted in contending there was insufficient justification for commissary stores, and commissary management improvements were inadequate. GAO had contended that customers would still save up to 14 percent if appropriated funding for commissaries were discontinued, but DoD countered that the figure was more like 7 percent. Another GAO proposal, that commissaries should be shut down and military pay increased, would be counterproductive, DoD said, because the cost to the taxpayers would far exceed the cost of maintaining commissaries. Meanwhile, military pay lagged behind inflation, making commissaries all the more necessary, especially in high cost-of-living metropolitan areas.

Most significantly, DoD disagreed with GAO's contention that Congress had originally intended commissaries only for remote locations. Showing a familiarity with the history and true origins of the benefit, DoD contended, "Congress established commissaries in 1866 to replace civilian merchants called sutlers who sold food, tobacco, and other products to military personnel." Since the sutlers frequently overcharged and overextended customers' credit, the reason for establishing commissaries was to provide financial relief for Army personnel, wherever they were located. "Geography," the DoD held, "was a factor only in that the nation was predominantly rural in 1866 and the military had personnel stationed primarily at frontier outposts."

DLA, CBO AND TSA

In late 1977, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense had requested the services and the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) to comment on three versions of commissary consolidation: an independent agency, overview by DLA, and one service acting as executive agent. The services indicated they were opposed to any form of consolidation. In their opinion, of the three choices, only the independent agency was acceptable. This option was the one ultimately chosen in 1990.

The Department of Defense noted the need to more effectively supervise military commissaries, and established the Commissary Executive Board in 1977 as a policymaking group empowered to set goals, evaluate performance, and guide the services in the operation of their commissary systems. These actions reinforced the services' systems and bolstered DoD's commitment to the benefit. DoD allowed the military services to continue separate operation of their commissary systems. However, a possible merger remained "a long-term objective for future consideration."

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO), which often was critical of the benefit, briefly changed its tune. It reported in 1983 to the House Armed Services Committee, "The loss of commissary benefits would have an impact on military retention. A decrease in retention would lead to increased training and recruiting costs or would require increasing some other benefit to maintain current retention levels." Yet, in the years to come, the CBO continued to call for privatization, which potentially could negatively affect the benefit's value.

At the end of 1984, the House Armed Services Committee directed the Army's Troop Support Agency to conduct a commissary price comparison survey. This survey, conducted by the firm of Penn & Schoen, examined patron savings at commissaries in the continental United States. It included 24 Air Force, 16 Army, 8 Navy, and 2 Marine locations. Results showed a 25.02-percent patron savings at Air Force stores and 24.74 percent throughout the armed services. Comparison with civilian warehouse stores showed commissaries had a better selection, as well as a savings of 15.63 percent.

CONTRACTING OUT AND PRIVATIZATION

Maj. Gen. Daniel Burkett, retired and writing for Military Market, said early in 1981, "The idea of contracting out commissaries is one of those dumb ideas that seems to rear its ugly head with every change in administration. ... In most instances I do not believe that contracting out is really cheaper-rather, it's the result of clever computations using warped figures."

In 1981, a Comptroller General's report to Congress titled "Military Contractor-Operated Stores are Unmanageable and Vulnerable to Abuse" examined base-level contractor-operated stores for vehicle repair parts and civil engineering supplies. In its summary, the report stated that vehicle parts stores were "plagued by pricing irregularities, contract abuses, and repeated allegations

of fraud. The Department of the Air Force, despite concerted efforts over the last several years, has been unable to develop a workable store contract for purchasing the thousands of low-cost, commercial items its bases need daily. GAO thinks the Secretary of Defense should discontinue the use of contractor-operated stores. Workable, cost-effective alternatives, such as Government-operated stores, should be used to establish purchasing control."

The problems cited, conclusions reached, and warnings given in this report could easily be applied to commissaries without any stretch of the imagination. The commissaries were, literally, government-controlled stores already in operation; those favoring privatization advocated establishing the very types of stores against which the comptroller warned.

In February 1981, responding to a 1979 OMB Circular, the Army's Troop Support Agency revealed plans to evaluate costs and study the feasibility of contracting out its management and operational activities in the continental United States. All seventytwo CONUS Army commissaries would be studied and evaluated for their adaptability to contracting out. The cost studies would include shelf stocking, produce and meat processing, checkouts, and the labor for storage and troop issue. Interestingly, a 1981 General Accounting Office report that supported the existing system noted that contracting out seemed to be used primarily as a way for the services to circumvent personnel ceilings.

But TSA felt compelled to conduct these studies, in part because of pressure from OMB. In addition, the CEO of a major chain of civilian food stores had written Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger volunteering his company to do the contracting out studies for the Army. The CEO also suggested that his chain would be interested in obtaining contracts to manage and supply commissary stores.

His letter, in part, stated:

'I have heard reports that the commissary operations may be phased out as part of the president's expense-control legislation. Should this ever be the case, we ... would be most interested in discussing the possibilities of management or supply contracts with us. Being the world's largest retail grocer, we feel we could be of some assistance Please do

TSA in Germany: 'WUNDERBAR!'

T THE END of World War II, the United States committed itself to preserving world peace by stationing troops throughout the world.

In Europe, American forces stabilized the balance between East and West and, in concert with their NATO allies, acted as a deterrent to the possibility of aggression by the Soviet Union.

The Americans were most conspicuous in occupying West Germany; later, when West Germany became a NATO partner, American troops and air bases remained.

There were over a hundred U. S. military installations with populations large enough to merit commissaries inside West Germany. The vast majority of these stores were run by TSA at Army posts.





McCULLY BARRACKS. The commissary at McCully Barracks in Wackernheim opened in 1987. The building had been constructed in 1938 and was one of the smallest commissaries in the world, with a sales area of only 1,450 square feet.



HANAU. The store shown here was in operation by 1954, and probably earlier. It had been constructed as a horse-training facility in 1938 at the German Army's Pioneer Kaserne. In the 1970s it had an annex at Fliegerhorst. This store was replaced by a new facility in 1987.



FRANKFURT. The Frankfurt Military Community commissary and clothing sales store, shown here in the late 1980s. It had been built in 1954, and by the mid-1960s it was the largest of the Army's stores in Europe. As a result of the post-Cold War drawdown, the store closed in April 1995.



BERLIN. These rolls, emblazoned with the shield of the U.S. Army's Berlin command, were available at several local stores. Berlin, one of the first hot spots during the Cold War, was home to numerous bases with several stores supporting them.

not hesitate to contact me."

Exchange & Commissary News quoted the executive as explaining in a telephone interview, "We have not been asked to assist in any such study, [but] we would be at their disposal." What made the situation especially ironic was that the executive had also been quoted as saying that his chain did not contract out any of the operations in its stores in the United States—because it wasn't cost-effective. This letter dispelled any illusions most neutral parties may have had regarding the supposed ambivalence major retail grocery chains felt toward the commissaries.

Meanwhile, Gen. Lew Allen, the Air Force chief of staff, expressed his concerns that contracting out the commissaries would eventually lead to "pay as you go" stores. That would necessitate increasing the surcharge to about 15 percent, which would effectively negate the benefit. Allen asked the services to look at contracting problems together before reaching any final decisions on their own.

In July 1983, the commanders of the commissary agencies attended the A-76 Blue Ribbon Group Conference in Washington, D.C., which examined the feasibility of contracting out certain commissary operations. The group initiated studies of seven custodial and shelf-stocking operations and four resale warehouse operations. These studies were done in response to the Air Force's announced plans to conduct formal functional reviews that would result in new manpower standards and possible losses of existing authorizations.

In April 1981, representatives of the services' commissary systems met with Army Maj. Gen. Thomas U. Greer, management director in the Office of the Army Chief of Staff, to discuss the services' projected plans for contracting out their commissary operations. The Army revealed it had considerably softened its earlier stance, saying it would press ahead only with tests at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and Yuma Proving Grounds, Arizona. It was impossible to test its seventy-two stateside stores by 1985 as originally planned. The Marines indicated they were considering contracting out janitorial and custodial,



storage and warehouse issue, and shelf stocking. The Air Force expressed satisfaction with their status quo—the contracting out of shelf stocking and janitorial and custodial. The Navy had the most radical proposal of all: turn commissary employees into non-appropriated fund (NAF) personnel by paying them with NAF funds. The NAF money would then be reimbursed from operating and maintenance funds.

Despite the various plans that were leaked to the press that made these options seem inevitable, overall congressional reaction to possible changes—particularly to contracting out—remained chilly.

A PRIVATIZATION TEST: CONTRACTING OUT IN YUMA

It was obvious that privatization and contracting out were twin concepts that were not going away. To some, they seemed perfectly all-American in the face of supposed government competition. Despite the lambasting that Congress would give the Grace Commission regarding privatization of the commissaries, the Army conducted a test to contract out most of the operations in a single commissary store at Yuma Proving Ground, Arizona, from 1983-86.

This situation was not unique. Three stores in Turkey, nominally run by the Air Force Commissary Service, were actually run by a contractor under AFCOMS supervision. However, the Yuma experiment was

the first time contracting out had been tried with an entire commissary in the United States since 1895, when post traders had been abolished.

The Yuma contract went into effect on December 1, 1983. The contractor, Uniserv, Inc., was a small-business set-aside and specialized in support services contracts. It was to be paid \$249,326 for the first year of the contract, which could be renewed annually. One commissary officer predicted a "drastic deterioration in service. ... Each time I go to a civilian supermarket, I am appalled at the customer service, or maybe I should say, the lack thereof."

As it happened, this test ended in failure on October 1, 1986, when the contractor admitted he could not provide everything requested. He also complained that the standards were tougher to meet than in the civilian sector. Predictably, no one on either side of the question changed their minds. The Yuma operation proved only that while some portions of the commissary could be effectively contracted out, others could not, unless standards were lowered.

The privatization test that had been proposed for Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, was never contracted because the in-house cost was more economical than the contractors' bids. To some, this seemed to indicate that the commissaries were providing the American taxpayer a good bargain. Contractors, in business to make money,



simply could not be expected to handle an operation that sold at cost.

THE GRACE COMMISSION

President Ronald Reagan, who had come into office in 1981 on a platform promising to cut government expenditures, created the President's Select Committee on Cost Control to examine ways in which the government could fulfill that promise. It was better known as the Grace Commission for J. Peter Grace, its chairman, a staunch advocate of privatizing as many government functions as possible. Grace had been chairman of the W. R. Grace Company since 1932, a diversified business which specialized in chemicals, packaging, and construction materials. It had subsidiaries throughout the country and overseas.

The commission was made up of thirty-six separate task forces, two of which looked specifically at military commissaries. The commission's final report was published in January 1984. It made 2,478 recommendations, among which was its stance that all stateside commissaries should either be run by private industry or closed. The Heritage Foundation, a conservative "think tank," soon published a report of its own that supported the Grace Commission.

Patrick Nixon, working for TSA in 1983, hosted executives from Giant Foods who toured commissaries during the Grace Commission's study in 1983. Afterwards, they told him they would be glad to serve

as distributors to military commissaries, but they did not wish to run them. Years later, Nixon recalled: "The grocery business is full of hard-working people, and the folks in the commissary are the hardest-working people because of the volume of business that we do. The people from Giant are in a profit business, not a turnover business. People who knew the grocery business said they understood the differences."

Maj. Gen. Daniel Burkett, former AFCOMS commander, said the idea of privatization was "another of the many cases we have been subjected to in the past in which a 'study' group begins with a predetermined conclusion, then attempts to justify that conclusion with distorted facts and amateurish analysis. ... Those congressmen who know little or nothing about commissaries ... could be taken in by the factual errors and the omissions." Specifically pointing to the Grace Commission, Burkett noted that "no mention was made of overseas commissaries or the impact on morale and retention. ... [It was] a very biased and unprofessional analysis." The Grace commission, not in the commissary business and not entirely comprehending a business that didn't turn a profit, did not seem to understand the difference.

Responding to the release of a preliminary report from the commission, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the president should resist any attempt to alter

the commissaries. When the final report came out, members of the House Armed Services Committee's Readiness Subcommittee examined its recommendations and held hearings on the subject. The report's adherents received a hostile reception from the congressmen, who shredded the report on numerous errors in assumption, fact, and methodology. For example, the commission thought that commissaries were all "warehouse stores," which was simply untrue. Commission members received that impression by visiting only two stores, both in the Washington, D.C., area. (These were stores at Cameron Station and Fort Belvoir—and the Belvoir store, ironically, would soon be replaced by a modern facility.)

The report had suggested no realistic alternative as to how to fund the overseas stores; it was also apparent that civilian grocery chains wanted to assume control of commissaries in urban areas with the highest sales figures, but they were unwilling to take over isolated stores.

Some influential witnesses sided against commissary privatization. Lawrence J. Korb, assistant secretary of defense for manpower, installations, and logistics, said that commissaries were part of the total compensation package, and cited three recent surveys confirming the stores were perceived as the second most-important benefit. Korb also noted the increased real costs to the taxpayer of paying active-duty



and retirees in dollars rather than with a commissary subsidy.

Army Lt. Gen. Dean R. Tice, deputy assistant secretary of defense for military personnel and force management, spent four years (1979-83) trying to make the allvolunteer force viable. Part of his effort entailed opposition to the closure of stateside commissaries. He maintained the Grace Commission's work was flawed, and that commissaries should be viewed as a part of the military's total compensation package. In an interview, he said he was open to GAO suggestions as to how to make the commissaries more efficient. "I would implement them [the suggestions] tomorrow. But dammit, don't come in here ... and tell me that we should not have commissaries. The Congress has determined that we should have commissaries and has supported us on it." Tice was straightforward and to the point: Congress, not the GAO, made policy; the GAO could make all the suggestions it wanted, but it was not in the driver's seat.

Representative John Kasich (R-Ohio), who was not always friendly to the commissaries, on this occasion said that if the commissaries were eliminated, the government would be "shooting itself in the foot," because military pay would have to be raised to compensate for the loss, and this would ultimately cause retirement pay

to be raised, as well. Kasich asked a key question regarding privatization: "The purpose of the Grace Commission is to figure out a way to reduce the deficit. Are we reducing, or are we increasing, if we follow this [privatization] approach?"

Also testifying on behalf of the commissaries were the Air Force Commissary Service's Maj. Gen. George Lynch; the Army Troop Support Agency's Brig. Gen. James Hayes; the Navy Resale and Services Support Office's Rear Adm. Donald Wilson; Brig. Gen. Louis Buehl, the director of the Marine Corps' Facilities and Services Division, Installation and Logistics Department; and Rear Adm. David Harlow, the commander of the Naval Military Personnel Command

and deputy chief of Naval Personnel.

Witnesses who were lesser known, but just as articulate, lined up to speak on commissaries' behalf. Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Robert Cleary noted commissaries "have been over the years invaluable to recruitment, but even more important to retaining our trained men and women." Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Sam Parish said, "The commissaries are looked upon as an entitlement by our enlisted folks. ... Even these hearings, regardless of the outcome, cause turmoil or ripples among our enlisted folks. ... These are the type of signals that I believe we can ill afford to continue sending if we want to retain a strong professional military force."

Parish also asked the nagging question



that military families had been asking for years: "Why is it that the military has to have a warehouse [store] instead of a supermarket? ... We are taxpayers, and some of us pay substantial taxes. I don't understand it, and it bothers me that the citizens of our country think that because you're in the military you will accept second-class status, and [still] provide a firstline defense." Four military wives, all commissary advocates, also had the opportunity to testify, and one of them explained her resentment this way: "Why should my kids have to eat corn flakes that come out of a plain white box, without prizes, instead of Cheerios and Pac-Man cereal?"

Many military families felt they were being treated like second-class citizens, which was especially galling when they were routinely asked to move every few years, or split up for years at a time, or be called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice in the nation's defense.

Military Market editor Nancy Tucker wrote that the testimony by the Grace Commission and the supermarket industry at the HASC hearings in March 1984 had been "pure bunk." Part of that bunk had been emphasized by committee staffer Will Cofer, who saw an "inherent self-contradiction" in logic by civilian supermarket operators who complained on the one hand that they were being undersold by commissaries, while on the other they claimed that commissaries did not actually provide their patrons with any actual savings.

Congress ultimately rejected the Grace Commission's recommendations for commissary privatization, disparaging the commission for shoddy work: inaccurate data, incorrect assumptions, biased writing, and flawed methodology. The worst methodology had been in the choice of private industry experts the commission consultedpeople who stood to benefit financially if commissaries were privatized. Congress advised the services to carry on and continue their commissary operations.

Still, the Grace Commission's adherents persisted. Citizens Against Waste, a lobby group inspired by Grace and nationally syndicated columnist Jack Anderson, demanded congressional action on the commission's recommendations. Early in 1985, Grace adherent Trevor Armbrister penned an article, published by Reader's Digest, that claimed the existence of commissaries was no longer justified. Armbrister dragged out the old "commissaries were meant only for remote posts" fallacy, completely ignoring both the historical record and the DoD response to the Government Accouting Office just five years previously.

Constant repetition of this fallacy seldom failed to attract followers. Mobil Corporation had trotted out the old myth in an advertisement on "Waste and the Deficit," sarcastically noting "isolated outposts" in urban areas such as Norfolk and San Diego. The Foundation for the President's Private Sector Survey on Cost Control brought up the issue in a brochure entitled, "We Can Blow the Whistle on Government Waste." Fortunately, Congress proved to be more historically savvy.

Over the ensuing years, commissary opponents persisted despite the fact that Congress had repudiated the Grace Commission's methods and its conclusions regarding commissaries. Some retail organizations opposed to commissaries still regard the Grace Commission report as their bible, and with it they still try to influence members of Congress who are unfamiliar with the history of the debates.

RELATIVE STABILITY, 1986-88

Following the Yuma experiment and the Grace Commission, the commissaries enjoyed a brief period of relative calm and stability. For the first time in years, their existence appeared secure, allowing them to concentrate on serving their patrons. A renewed emphasis on customer service-with heavy emphasis on the families, since it was the spouses and children who did most of the active-duty shopping—was becoming evident throughout the armed services.

Reflective of the way things had changed since World War II, Army Col. Herbert Lloyd, chief of staff at Fort Drum (New York), noted, "Fort Drum is



1980s: FORT GREELEY, Alaska. A customer checks the jams, jellies, and preserves. The store pictured here opened in 1982 and was later named TSA's Best Small OCONUS Store in 1987, 1989, and 1990, and DeCA's Best Small Store in its region in 1992 and 1993. TSA photo, DeCA historical file

extremely interested in soldier families. And the priority of our \$1.6 billion building effort speaks for itself in that the first things we did was to build housing for families. The next priority is the PX and commissary." The new commissary at Fort Drum, completed in 1988, would be a modern facility.

CRISIS IN IRAN

History is filled with examples of sudden revolutions, uprisings, and invasions that changed the face of world politics and endangered anyone who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. The abandonment of numerous forts and shipyards in the days prior to the Civil War, the chaos in Peking during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 and in Manila during December 1941, and the calamitous, breakneck escape from Saigon in 1975 are all examples of precipitous events that were seldom foreseen and never controllable.

Occasionally, commissaries and commissary personnel have been caught in such events. Such was the case in 1978-79, when a deteriorating political situation in Iran resulted in the fall of the Shah and threatened the lives of Westerners. This

was especially true of the substantial military and diplomatic community in Tehran, the capital.

The American community included personnel who ran a commissary for the Army's Troop Support Agency. On July 13, 1978, a new commissary opened in Tehran. Replacing an old, outmoded store in the embassy compound was an \$11-milliondollar facility, situated in the northwest part of the city. The Shah had paid for its construction. Commissary officer Tom Fisher, at the time an Army major, remembers that it had "all the modern equipment that was supposed to be in a commissary at that time." It had twelve registers, about 30,000 square feet of sales space and 50,000 square feet of warehouse space, and it carried twelve thousand line items. In many ways it was the equal of any store in the states or in Europe. Sales were nearly \$800,000 a month. It was "a great operation," Fisher says. (see feature, pages 296-97)

The commissary supported nearly ten thousand Americans. In that remote location at the far end of the supply pipeline (and 9,000 miles from home was just about as remote as you could get), the commissary was of great importance to every one of them. Fisher remembers that about fifteen thousand people, both American and Iranian, attended the grand opening. "It was probably one of the biggest events ever for the Americans in-country."

Within a few months of the store's opening, the political situation began to deteriorate. As things worsened, family members were evacuated back to the states. Fisher's family was sent to Fort Lee,



1986-87: FORT IRWIN, located at Barstow, California, was one of the more remote posts in the United States. The new commissary, here shown under construction, has proven its value to the local base population since the day it opened. TSA photo, DeCA historical file

Virginia, where they received government quarters, per diem, and had priority at the hospital. Fisher eventually had to abandon the store, and left the country before the infamous hostage crisis began. His store was the only commissary in recent memory to close due to hostile action.

CONGRESSMAN DANIEL AND THE WASHINGTON POST

In April 1979, even as the crisis was unfolding in Iran, an article attacking the commissaries appeared in *The Washington Post*. It described a well-to-do, retired admiral's wife living in an expensive home in the Washington area and buying food subsidized with tax dollars at one of the D.C.-area commissaries. The story also con-

tained quotes from an unnamed retired Army colonel, who collected retirement pay while holding a civilian job, and several Senate aides who were opposed to the commissary subsidy because it benefitted retired officers who had plenty of money. But the article said nothing about enlisted families living in the high-cost district.

The article prompted a vigorous response from Congressman Dan Daniel (D-Va), chairman of the Non-Appropriated Fund Panel of the House Investigations Subcommittee. Daniel attacked the story, noting:

"Flag officers represent only fourtenths of 1 percent of retired and three percent of active duty military personnel. ... A far better illustration of the average

commissary shopper is buried in the story in the person of Mrs. Judy Kowal, whose staff sergeant husband's income (which according to your story is \$13,320 per year) must be supplemented by both spouses working in order to support their family of five. This salary is \$9,046 less than the median income for families living in [the Washington, D.C.] area."

Daniel also stressed that the overwhelming majority of



retirees were not fortytwo-year-old officers who were "double dipping," but rather enlisted families on low incomes. He sarcastically remarked about the Senate aides who opposed the "taxpayer subsidy" of the commissaries: "The opinion of the Senate staffer who is not elected by the people to speak for anyone may be understandable in light of the fact

that his income is many times that of the active duty E-4, and at least five times that of the average retiree." The Post refused comment and stood by its original story, but Daniel had made his point.

PRIVATIZATION, REVISITED

For a few years following the rejection of the Grace Commission recommendations on commissaries, the services had a chance to concentrate on pleasing their customers. The contracting-out issue was briefly revived in September 1987 with the appointment of twelve people to the President's Commission on Privatization. The following December, in a public hearing, the commission heard testimony from Marine Lt. Gen. Anthony Lukeman, deputy assistant secretary of defense for military manpower and personnel policy; a representive of the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), Michael C. Bourgoine from the Wetterau Food Distribution Group; and L. Wayne Arny III, associate director, Office of Management and Budget, National Security and International Affairs.

Having seen the three-year experiment fail at Yuma, FMI was determined to force another privatization test. Bourgoine stated the perennial FMI stance: "Given the food industry's efficiency, quality and variety, we have long wondered why the government sees a need to be in the grocery business—particularly since it takes an increasing number of tax dollars to do so." However, his presentation seemed to actually damage FMI credibility. House Armed Services' Committee professional staff



member Will Cofer wanted to know how the FMI could explain the discrepancy between one claiming the commissaries got lower wholesale prices than civilian grocers and the other claiming that commissaries did not save the patrons at least 20 percent.

Arny said a new test of contracting out commissary operations would show that privatizing commissaries would reduce costs and improve customer service. If the test failed, then "we will have proven that the current system truly is the best one to handle the mission." It seems as if both FMI and Arny were determined to ignore or discount the results of the Yuma test.

If anyone needed reminding, Lukeman pointed out the failures at Yuma and Fort Leonard Wood. Noting differences in commissaries and private-sector stores, he said, "Competitors may target a specific market and operate at reduced margins, reduce prices, perhaps even operate at a loss in the short term, in order to increase market share and profits over the long term." They would also "cherry-pick"; that is, they would try to acquire contracts to only the most lucrative locations, leaving the least profitable operations out of their plans. Lukeman cautioned that in any upcoming tests the key would be the ability to "accurately and objectively measure the true costs and long-term consequences."

In January, the House Armed Service's Committee ignored Lukeman's testimony and actually voted to recommend that stateside commissaries be privatized, saying, "Private-sector operation offers greater management efficiencies as a result of

the advantages of competitive stimulus, and therefore the private sector should operate and manage the military commissary system."

But not everyone was convinced that privatization would save the taxpayers any more money than the existing commissary systems. The recommendation ultimately went nowhere. The president's commission dropped the privatization concept upon reviewing the historical record and the manner in which commissaries were being run. This high-level attention to the commissaries, however, would only be a precursor of things to come.

PROGRESSIVE TRANSFORMATION

During the 1970 and 1980s, the stores of each service began looking more like civilian supermarkets as they increasingly adopted more of the civilian grocery industry's methods of operation.

Early in 1986, the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings bill, which was intended to balance the federal budget, caused funding cuts that threatened to curtail commissary operations. At the very least, it appeared operating hours would have to be trimmed.

Other possible ways to cut expenses included deferring construction and renovation projects, cutting back on customer research surveys, and frequent delivery.

This last possibility was intriguing. Having vendors deliver goods more often would obviate the need for large warehouse operations at most stores. By 1986, NAVRESSO, TSA, and AFCOMS all began experimenting with frequent delivery as an alternative to warehousing and central distribution centers.

Electronic scanning began taking the place of the old manual cash registers in the mid 1970s. As usual, the private sector led the way, and once the method was proven "tried and true," the military commissary systems began to adopt the practice. The Navy acted first, scanning its first groceries at Moffett Field, California, in 1976. The store at Naval Base Norfolk, Virginia, converted to scanning shortly afterward, in 1977. By the late 1980s, all but the smallest and most isolated military commissaries were using scanning equipment.

BOXED, TRAY-READY, AND CASE-READY BEEF

Traditionally, most large commissaries employed their own professional meat cutters, who cut and broke down carcasses of beef, lamb, and veal into their many components. Meat department employees then packaged and priced the various cuts of meat. Branch stores and annexes received their beef from their parent or hub store. Customers who didn't want to cut their chicken themselves could have the meat cutters do it for them.

Pork, however, came from the packer already cut into chops, ribs, and roasts,

while whole chickens arrived at the stores plucked, cleaned, and packed in ice. In the 1970s, as stock lists began to expand and customer convenience became paramount, commissaries began to make fresh meats available in different forms. To reduce the bottlenecks that always developed in the meat department, where customers would wait for personal service from a meat cutter who supplied them with specific cuts of meat, commissaries provided pre-packaged meats in the most popular cuts and weights. Case-ready beef was already packaged, ready to be placed onto a tray and set in the meat display cases. "Tray-ready" was a cut of meat delivered to the stores needing only minimal trimming.

Early on, pork and chicken could be had in various tray-ready and case-ready forms. Pork and chicken both became available in "tray packs," larger packages that contained either a variety of cuts or several pieces of the same cut.

In the 1980s, beef joined the ranks of tray-ready and case-ready meats. The latter could arrive in pre-priced packages, but they were usually priced at the store. The big advantage of these products was the amount they saved in shipping costs. There was some expectation that boxed beef would also save on labor costs, but the boxed product took considerable time to

unpack and do the necessary cutting and trimming, and the skill level needed to properly break down the boxed beef wasn't appreciably different than what was needed to process carcass beef. The biggest disadvantage was that case-ready, tray-ready, and boxed beef all cost the consumer more than carcass beef.

Proponents argued that boxed beef would save a significant amount of money in costs associated with labor, cleanup, and waste disposal. It also saved a significant amount of night-shift labor by meat cutters who no longer had to break down beef carcasses. There would also be a time-savings in getting the product from the delivery truck to the cooler, and into the customers' hands. Attracted by the money-saving implications, TSA's Midwest Region in 1978 became the first to experiment with the concept.

Not everyone was convinced this was the path to take. Boxed beef's opponents adamantly believed that the cost savings were superficial. Even if it was true that professional meat cutters would no longer be needed, someone still had to be paid to unpack, cut, and trim the meat. Whatever savings were realized by using semi-skilled people in place of professional meat cutters would be more than offset by the jump in price to the consumer, since boxed beef was more expensive than carcass beef. As one opponent said, "How does raising the price serve the customer?"

Another unfortunate side effect was that many young commissary meat cutters lost their jobs, and with them, the commissaries lost a generation of young, skilled professionals. Mike Domitrovich, a long-time employee of the Navy and Air Force commissaries (see feature, pages 292-93), today believes this loss of young personnel was a mistake; the energetic "young guns," who were needed to keep the commissaries progressive, were instead let go. Domitrovich had hoped the switch to boxed beef would be gradual, with jobs lost only through natural attrition. He still maintains that doing otherwise was a mistake.

The Air Force held out the longest of all the services, but in the summer of 1986, it,



1987: SIGONELLA, Sicily. Although fruit and vegetables were available on the local market, overseas buyers had to order many of their goods from the Defense Personnel Support Center (DPSC) in Philadelphia many months in advance. Shown here at Naval Air Station Sigonella is Ship's Serviceman Third Class Bridgit Gallagher, produce manager, working in Building 193. The facility was built as a warehouse in 1967 and converted to commissary use in 1981. A new store replaced this facility on May 31, 2002, with a sales area of 30,936 square feet, twelve checkouts, and 8,706 line items. (See page 42 for a photo of the store's exterior.) U.S. Navy Historical Center

too, succumbed to what proponents of boxed beef claimed was the "wave of the future." Today, anyone visiting the meat preparation areas of old commissaries can see empty meat hooks hanging on their overhead tracks, evidence that processing carcasses of beef-as well as veal and lambhad once been the only way to do business.

EXPERIMENTS: SOFT DRINKS. SALAD BARS, AND FREE BEEF

Beef and pork for overseas commissaries were usually purchased overseas, as long as the meat met U.S. Department of Agriculture health standards. AFCOMS began testing how to stock U.S. pork and beef in European commissaries in February 1986. The following month, AFCOMS obtained 200 million pounds of surplus beef, veal, and pork for either inexpensive sale or to give away to customers in Europe. A great deal of wrangling and legal argument took place before AFCOMS ultimately decided to give the meat away as a customer service. There was a strict limit on amounts per customer.

Also in 1986, an agreement between the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, AFCOMS, and TSA allowed U.S.-produced soft drinks to be sold in European commissaries (rather than in exchanges only) for the first time. After including the 5-percent surcharge, the commissary sold them at the same prices charged by the exchanges. In March, soft drink sales commenced in the United Kingdom; in May, they began in Italy, Turkey, and Greece.

Salad bars became the rage both in the states and overseas in the mid 1980s. Fresh greens and fruits were popular in civilian stores, and they made their inroads in the commissaries as well. But the novelty of the salad bars gradually faded, and they are only seen today in a few stores where they have remained exceptionally popular.

DIFFERENCES REMAINED

Obvious similarities aside, commissaries retained a number of practices that made them distinct and different from civilian-sector grocery stores. One of the more significant areas was their non-acceptance of credit cards. Although civilian warehouse gro-



ceries had been accepting credit cards as early as the 1970s, commissaries were reluctant to adopt the practice. In an era when young people in uniform were getting into debt faster and more deeply than ever before, commissary commanders carefully weighed the ramifications of possibly adding monthly grocery bills to that debt. A growing number of bounced checks also made the commissaries reluctant to accept the cards unless there was a way of instantly verifying the payment. Consequently, the services' commissary agencies were slow to adopt the practice.

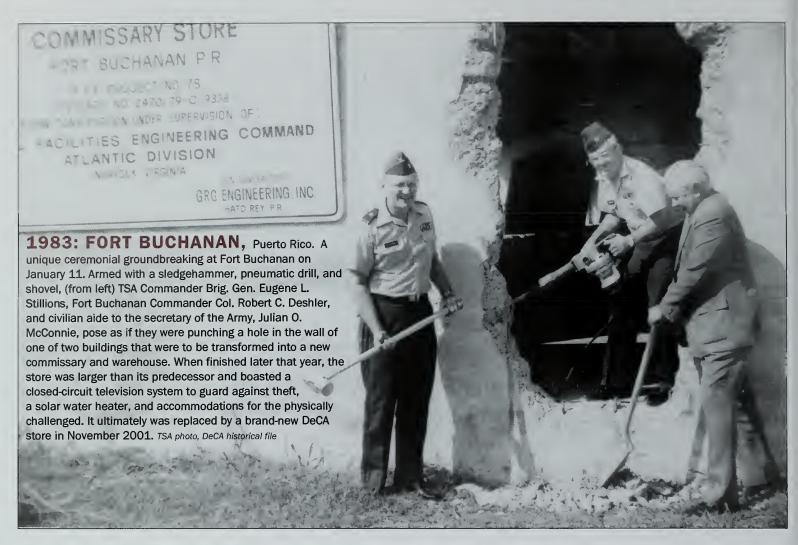
As the technology for verifying payments improved, commissaries would gradually accept credit cards for payment. By late 1994, the commissary began accepting the cards, although it was almost the twenty-first century before every store was equipped to handle them.

TOBACCO AND HBA

Tobacco and health & beauty aid products (HBA) were two more areas that presented problems. Both were sold by the exchanges, and by selling them the commissary seemed to be setting itself up in competition with the exchanges. The commissaries claimed that they were providing a convenience and a service to their customers by stocking such items, enabling customers to pick up one or two HBA items without having to go to another store. There was plenty of historical precedent, as well; commissaries for years had sold soap and shaving items.

With tobacco, the question was deeper than one of simple competition with the exchanges. Tobacco had previously (1964) been declared unsafe by the U.S. surgeon general, and by the mid-1970s it was becoming generally accepted that smoking could indeed be linked with lung cancer and other ailments. Because the military had a vested interest in keeping its personnel healthy, it seemed incongruous for the commissaries to sell any form of tobacco. By selling tobacco products—particularly, selling them at prices considerably lower than stores in the civilian sector—the commissaries seemed to be encouraging a habit that was potentially debilitating and deadly.

The counterargument was that the product was legal, its sale was authorized by Congress, tobacco had long been sold in commissaries as well as issued in rations, and the commissaries were merely providing a customer service by making the product available at low prices. The com-



missaries' logic was simple: Customers wanting tobacco would buy it somewhere, regardless of whether the commissaries sold it or not, so what was the point in their not being able to purchase it at their commissary at affordable prices? There seemed little point in losing the business of smokers who were rapidly making tobacco a "destination" item; that is, people would go to the commissaries specifically to buy cigarettes or other tobacco products because of the lower prices. Once there, they would also purchase food items. But it was the tobacco that got them in the door.

The issue of selling tobacco in the commissaries remained volatile. In 1985-86, the arguments got acrimonious, with first the Senate and then the assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, Dr. William E. Mayer, saying cigarettes should be sold only at the same prices prevailing "outside the gates." Mayer had no wish to stop tobacco sales entirely, but he didn't want the commissaries' low prices to encourage service

members to begin or continue smoking.

Congressman Dan Daniel responded testily that members of the military didn't need a "brass nanny" telling them what to do. Daniel charged that Meyer, "Seated in his Pentagon office with any commodity he might want readily available on the civilian market ... has chosen to ignore the creature comforts of those on or under the seas, or stationed in remote outposts, who do not have the wealth of resources available to them."

But Mayer was hardly alone. Even the American Lung Association wrote to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, urging him to increase cigarette prices in the commissaries and exchanges. The letter cited the large sum of money (\$15 million per month) spent by the Veterans Administration to assist forty-two thousand veterans suffering from smoking-related ailments such as emphysema, chronic bronchitis and cancer. In 1986, Weinberger refused to ban cigarettes from commissaries, while simultaneously ordering a tough anti-smoking campaign be carried out throughout DoD.

Eventually the arguments embodied the classic debate as to where the rights of the individual ended and the responsibilities of the government began. As of this writing, tobacco is still available in most commissaries on Army and Air Force bases, but it is now sold at exchange prices. DeCA is reimbursed for its costs in handling tobacco for the exchanges.

ALCOHOL AND ADVERTISING

There remained several major disparities between the commissaries and civilian grocery stores. Perhaps the most noticeable was the commissaries' complete lack of alcoholic beverages. Since 1867, beer and wine had never been sold in the commissaries, and no one in the commissary systems was inclined to change that tradition. Alcohol remained the province of the exchange system. Other items common in civilian supermarketsranging from bicycle tires and pool toys to greeting cards—also remained off the commissary stock lists. There was no point in the commissaries and exchanges competing with each other.

In 1985, to avoid the appearance of competition with the private sector, stricter rules were established regarding commissaries' right to advertise. Although there was no legislation prohibiting the practice, advertising was restricted outside the store, with the exception of installation newspapers. Even there, no mention of actual prices could be made. Ads could only say how many cents were to be saved on a given item, or what percentage off the regular price an item was selling for in a given week.

A DOUBLE LOSS

On the eve of the decisions as to whether or not consolidation was going to occur, the commissaries' two most dedicated and powerful supporters in Congress passed away. On January 23, 1988, Rep. Dan Daniel (D-VA), chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee of the House Armed

Services Committee, died just four days after announcing that he would retire at the



1986: 'A FRIEND ON THE HILL.'

Congressman Dan Daniel, D-Virginia, a long-time proponent of the commissaries, speaks at the grand opening of the new store at Fort Meade, Maryland, 1986. Daniel passed away January 23, 1988. TSA photo, DeCA historical file

Daniel's eulogy given

end of the year.



1980: INFLUENTIAL SUPPORT. When Congressman William "Bill" Nichols (D-Alabama) passed away late in 1988, the commissaries lost their most influential congressional supporter. Nichols took an active interest in the commissaries; here he is the first customer at the new Fort McClellan, Alabama, store on April 11. Maj. Gen. Mary Clarke, post commander, did the honors at the register. TSA photo, DeCA historical file

Congressman William Flynt "Bill" Nichols, D-Alabama, the other prominent defender of the commissaries: "I first met Dan Daniel when the both of us were seeking seats on the House Committee on Armed Services. My name was selected first and so I ranked Dan by a matter of three minutes and one seat, and for twenty years we sat side by side on the committee. ...

"He will be remembered ... for his genuine heartfelt concern for people-to men and women who wear the uniform of the United States of America. His leadership in the Congress on behalf of child care facilities, housing, the G.I. Bill, and commissaries has made military living better for hundreds of thousands of American servicemen and women."

Nichols himself passed away just eleven months later, on December 13. He was a veteran of World War II and lost a leg fighting in Germany. He had been a member of the House Armed Services Committee

since 1968, and served as the chairman of its non-appropriated funds panel, and of the panel on commissaries and exchanges. He also chaired the subcommittee on Military Personnel and Compensation, and was a member of the Readiness subcommittee. "He was our man on the Hill," said Robert Waterhouse, commissary store officer at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, a store Nichols had frequently visited.

The loss of both Nichols and Daniel, two close friends and supporters of the commissaries, was a grievous blow to military retailing.

As the 1980s drew to a close, and the service commissaries reached their zenith, the end of the Cold War made it apparent that the commissaries were going to once again undergo considerable changes. The study group known as the Jones Commission was about to pave the way for consolidation.

Change was in the wind.

19 CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS

1974

1974

1974

1974

THE ARMED services operated 279 commissaries in the United States, and 418 worldwide. (1975 HR Report, *Information on Commissary Operations*, p. 3)

COMMISSARY customer savings were estimated to be 33 percent. The surcharge remained variable, depending upon the stores' service affiliation and location. The Air Force charged 3 percent at all its stores; the Army charged 3 percent in the continental United States (CONUS) and 2.5 percent overseas. Congress provided an increase to 4 percent to take effect in February 1976. The Marine Corps included surcharge markups in the price of each individual item, with the surcharge averaging 4.04 percent during fiscal 1972. In Navy stores, the surcharge was applied by item category. Grocery items had a 5-percent surcharge; meats, 3 to 5 percent in CONUS, 4 to 5 percent overseas; produce, 2.5 to 3.5 percent CONUS, 4.5 to 5.5 percent overseas. (Grubb, C. L. "Historical Brief: The Evolution of Military Commissaries" pp. 3-4; Military Market Facts Book, 1974, pp. 127, 138)

MOST COMMISSARIES ranged in size from 11,000 to 18,000 square feet of sales floor space. Stores built after 1970 tended to be larger—around 25,000 to 30,000 square feet. There were still plenty of old, small stores (4,000 square feet or less).

CONUS stores were open about 40 to 48 hours per week, while overseas stores averaged around 35. Stores carried between 2,000 and 4,000 line items at a time when commercial grocers averaged 8,000 to 9,000. A few of the newer, larger stores

1974: DOVER Air Force Base, Delaware. After putting up with makeshift, crowded facilities for years, customers found this new store in Delaware was bright, spacious, and included fifteen state-of-the-art checkouts. Photo courtesy Dover AFB Museum, DeCA historical file



1974

stocked up to 5,000 items. (1974 Facts, pp. 127-38)

BRAND-NAME products constituted about 95 percent of commissary grocery items. Unlike the other services, the Navy did not sell tobacco, soft drinks, candy, chewing gum, waxes and polishes, insecticides and other pest control agents in its commissaries. The Marines had banned cigarette and tobacco sales in their stores as of July 31, 1973. (1974 Facts, pp. 127-38)

1974

BY NOW the services all sold health and beauty aids in their commissaries. (1974 Facts, pp. 127-38)

MAY 3, 1974

Appropriations Committee, requested the comptroller general of the United States to perform a study on commissary programs in areas such as extended operating hours, need for commissaries in metropolitan areas, staffing patterns, need for military personnel, pricing practices, use of excess revenues, commissary store subsidies, and the need for new stores. (Comptroller General's Report, 1975)

JUNE 25, 1974

Food Retail Technology: Troy, Ohio, cashier Sharon Buchanan became the first person to use an electronic scanner to ring up a customer's purchase. The scanner was manufactured by National Cash Register (NCR) of Dayton, Ohio. (Elkort, The Secret Life of Food, p. 32; Progressive Grocer Web site, www.progressivegrocer.com, 29 Jun 2004)

JULY 1974

CONTROL ANALYSIS Corporation of Palo Alto, California, submitted a report to the Navy Resale System Office (NRSO) and the Naval Supply Systems Command (NSSC) on the possible effects of reducing or eliminating the Navy's commissary benefit. The report stated that if Navy commissaries were closed, for every dollar saved, \$2.48 in commissary benefit would be lost. If the stores remained open but became self-supporting, a 7.2-percent price increase would result. That would mean a projected 30-percent reduction in sales, and a major cost increase to the patron. (Control Analysis Corporation, Palo Alto, Calif., 1974, *The Net Cost of Reduced Navy Commissary Operations*)

JULY 1974

ARMY BRIG. GEN. Emmett W. Bowers

replaced Brig. Gen. J. C. McWhorter as commander of the Troop Support Agency.

AUG. 9, 1974

U.S. History: As a result of the Watergate scandal, Richard Nixon resigned the presidency. Gerald R. Ford became president.

SEPT. 13, 1974

A STUDY group for the Office of the Air Force

Chief of Staff identified six alternatives to commissary operations and recommended the Air Force to transition commissaries to self-supporting operations by fiscal 1976. This study was soon overcome by other events, but the report predicted the general trend of the future: "Real commissary sales will surely continue to rise ... the numbers of commissary employees will also rise in sharp contrast to falling active duty strength. This unfortunate dichotomy ... places demands on our relatively fixed yet inflation-eroded budget ... we can anticipate Congress and OMB to mount continued and increasingly aggressive attacks on use of appropriated funds to subsidize active duty and retired military grocery bills and to push vigorously to disestablish commissaries." (U.S. Air Force, Report of the Air Force Study Group: Study of Alternatives to Improve Efficiency, Operation and Organizational Structure, pp. 1, 112-38, esp. 125-26; cited hereafter as Alternatives)

OCTOBER 1974

THE AMERICAN Logistics Association reorganized and became a national trade association. (Military Market, Jun 1975, p. 12)

OCT. 23, 1974

SOLDIERS MAGAZINE published a survey of customers at five Army commissaries and nearby supermarkets. It showed a family of four spending \$200 per month at the commissary would save about \$600 per year compared to shopping at commercial stores. (Soldiers magazine, 23 Oct 1974)

OCT. 31, 1974

THE OFFICE of Management and Budget (OMB) study of commissary stores and exchanges identified three options to improve commissary operations: (1) a single DoD commissary system; (2) an exchange and commissary system for each service; and (3) a single exchange and commissary system for DoD. (Alternatives, pp. 1, 82-111)

DEC. 19, 1974 SECRETARY of Defense James R. Schlesinger



approved the Program/Budget Decision (PBD) No. 282, identifying five alternatives for commissaries. PBD 282 was designed to make commissaries selfsufficient within two years. (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense [manpower and reserve affairs], Study of Military Commissary Stores, May 1975 [hereafter cited as Bowers Study], Appendix 1-B; Operational Alternatives, pp. 1-2, 139-45)

JAN. 30, 1975

1975 A MEMORANDUM from William K. Brehm,

> assistant secretary of defense for manpower and reserve affairs, to the assistant secretaries of the military departments, stipulated the terms of reference for the study of military commissary stores and established the makeup of the study group. (Bowers Study, pp. 1-4 to 1-6; Operational Alternatives, pp. 139-45)

FEB. 1, 1975

NAVY COMMISSARY complexes were redesignated Navy commissary store regions to reflect that the overall responsibility of an officer in charge often included stores at several commands

and bases. (Navy Commissary Program, p. 4)

FEB. 8, 1975

BY NOW, each service made its nominations for the Brehm Study Group. Final selections included: chairman, Brig. Gen. Emmett W. Bowers, commander of the U.S. Army Troop Support Agency; vice-chairman, Capt. Robert L. Brevin, director of the commissary store division of the Naval Resale System Office; Cecil Saunders (a future DeCA region director), commissary program analyst, deputy chief of staff (installations and logistics), Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps; and Col. Jerry E. Conner, Office of the Judge Advocate General, Headquarters U.S. Air Force. For the complete list, see Appendix 5. The group became unofficially known as the Bowers Commission, and its study, the Bowers Study, after its chairman. (*Bowers Study*, pp. 1-15 to 1-17)

MARCH 1975

THE AIR FORCE published the Bowers Commission's "Study of Alternatives to Improve Efficiency, Operation and Organizational Structure to Commissaries." The report named eight alternatives to the existing system, including a centralized Air Force commissary system. (Alternatives, entire study; see esp. pp. 1-9)

APRIL 1975

THE GENERAL Accounting Office recommended banning all metropolitan-area commissaries. (*Military Market*, May 1975, p. 9)

APRIL 29-30, 1975 **U.S. Military History:** As the **North Vietnamese took Saigon**, the last group of U.S. personnel pulled out of Vietnam.

MAY 30, 1975

THE BOWERS Commission submitted its report, recommending the commissaries could best be managed within each service. The feasibility of combining all services' commissary systems into one agency was recommended for consideration after two years. (Bowers Study, 12-1 to 12-8)

JUNE 1975

REAR ADM. E. M. Kocher replaced Rear Adm. J. G. Schoggen as commanding officer of Navy Resale System Office. (*Navy Commissary Program*)

JULY 3, 1975

THE OFFICE of the Secretary of Defense approved the Bowers Commission's recommendations and directed the Army and Air Force to implement centralized commissary systems. There were two stipulations: no additional manpower spaces, and the commissary headquarters could not be located in the Washington, D.C., area. (Implementation Plan, p. 1)



1977: MEMPHIS, Tennessee. The store at Naval Air Station Memphis had a loading area next to the building to save customers and carryouts additional steps. The store had a 14,500-square-foot sales floor and a warehouse twice that size. This store was unusual in that it was not part of a Navy complex. Military Market, Army Times Publications

SEPT. 10, 1975

THE TROOP Support Agency initiated planning on how to manage the Army's commissaries.

OCT. 1, 1975

TO CUT appropriated fund costs, DoD was determined to make all its stores pay their own way. However, this was postponed for at least a year, due in part to a massive letter-writing campaign from customers who wanted to save their stores.

The Army and Air Force began planning to run their stores more professionally—a move that resulted in the centralization embodied by TSA and AFCOMS. Jerry McConnell, editor of Military Market, commented that neither service had shown "a real understanding of what is needed in commissary management for the past twenty-five years. Now, both services appear ready to overcome that quarter century of inattention." (Military Market, Oct 1975, p. 5)

OCT. 1, 1975

BRIG. GEN. Emmett W. Bowers visited Army commissaries, promoting the idea of centralization under the Troop Support Agency banner. Army Letter 30-75-3 (dated October 10) designated TSA the central management agency for Army commissaries. This became effective February 1, 1976. (Hucles, *Haversack*, pp. 111, 136)

DECEMBER 1975

THE NAVY started checkout scanning at Moffett Field, California. (E & C News, 15 Mar 1981, p. 61)

DEC. 18, 1975

THE AIR FORCE approved AFCOMS' commissary implementation plan and established a task force to initiate it. The task force was responsible for developing support agreements with host bases, writing position descriptions for key positions, and initiating transfers of commissary manning positions to AFCOMS.

1976

1976

THE THIRD Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation stated the value of the commissaries was greater than the actual cost to the government. (Office of Sec. of Defense, Third Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, Dec 1976)

1976

NAVRESSO ENTERED into a contract with National Cash Register (NCR) to install scanning units in eighty-two stores by the end of fiscal 1986. (Military Market, Apr 1986, p. 10)

JANUARY -MARCH 1976 **THE FIRST** issue of TSA's *Troop Support Digest*, previously known as *U.S. Army Food Program Digest*, was published.

JAN. 2, 1976

THE TSA commander was designated as head of subsistence procurement activity for the Army. (Hucles, *Haversack*, p.136)

JAN. 2, 1976

SPECIAL ORDER GA-2, issued by the Air Force, established and activated the Headquarters of the Air Force Commissary Service at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas, as a separate operating agency (SOA) effective January 1, 1976. (AFCOMS 1976 Annual History)

Congressman Henry B. Gonzales was instrumental in locating AFCOMS at San Antonio. When the continental division of the Military Air Transport Service moved out of Building 3030 at Kelly, he wanted another command or agency there. (Candido Corrada, interview with Dr. Peter D. Skirbunt, Jun 1991)

FEB. 1, 1976

THE ARMY and Air Force surcharge increase to 4 percent, legislated in 1974, took effect. The Army and Air Force charged a flat surcharge, which was applied to the bill at the time of sale. Navy and Marine Corps commissaries, however, continued to use a variable surcharge rate, included as a variable markup in the shelf price of each item that averaged just over 6 percent. (Grubb, "Evolution," p. 4; undated papers, DeCA historical files, "Surcharge Rate;" Hucles, *Haversack*, p. 113)

FEB. 1, 1976

THE TROOP Support Agency became the centralized management agency for Army commissaries (*see entry for* **Oct. 1, 1975**); the first nineteen stores to come under command and control of TSA belonged to the nine-state Southeast Region. The field office was located at Fort Lee, Virginia. In the coming months TSA established four more regions. (*Troop Support Digest,* Apr/May/Jun 1976; Jul/Aug/Sep 1976)

MARCH 15, 1976

THE AIR FORCE issued a revised plan for a centralized commissary system that included provisions for a board of directors, a headquarters, and four region offices. (1976 AFCOMS Annual History, ix; Implementation Plan, pp. 7, 13-34)

APRIL 1, 1976

MAJ. GEN. Daniel L. Burkett assumed command of Headquarters Air Force Commissary Service (Special Order G-1, 1976 AFCOMS Annual History, Documentation Annex)

JULY 1976

THE NAVY BEGAN a pilot survey project to study the use of scanners in its commissaries. (Exchange & Commissary News, 15 Mar 1981, p. 61)



1976: HOLLOMAN Air Force Base, New Mexico. A produce worker readies his section for the day's business. For store employees who were not commissary officers, store managers, or deputies, the training, retention, and promotion of skilled individuals became possible only after each service centralized its commissary operations. Before, such opportunities had been few and far between.

DeCA historical file

JULY 1, 1976

FORTY-FIVE more Army commissaries came under the command and control of the Troop Support Agency. These were the stores in the 14-state Northeast Region, with a field office at Fort Meade, Maryland, and the 18-state Midwest Region, with a field office at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. (*Troop Support Digest*, Jul/Aug/Sep 1976)

OCT. 1, 1976

AFCOMS ASSUMED control of Air Force commissaries. First customer: Joyce I. Kerin, Andersen Air Force Base, Guam. (USAF Special Order G-4, 28 Sep 1976; AFCOMS First Customer Certificate, in DeCA historical file)

OCT. 1, 1976

TSA's WESTERN Field Office opened at Fort Lewis, Washington, where it managed the Army's commissaries in eleven Western states, Korea, and Japan. The European Field Office, located in Zweibrucken, Germany, opened on the same date. TSA now had its full complement of five regions. (*Troop Support Digest*, Jul/Aug/Sep 1976)

DECEMBER 1976

THE FIRST issue of the *Marketer*, AFCOMS' employee newsletter, was published.

1977

THE NEW Panama Canal Treaty in 1977 allowed thirty-five hundred U.S. citizens employed by

Panama Canal Company (later called the Panama Canal Commission) and their families to shop at U.S. military commissaries in Panama. The big PCC store at Balboa became a TSA commissary. (Annual Report of Army Commissary Store Operations, Fiscal 1977, p. 9)

THE JOINT Services Commissary Committee was established. (Bill Moran, quoted in Military Market, Jan 1986, p. 35)

THE AIR FORCE Engineering and Services Agency (AFESA) was activated at Kelly

Air Force Base, Texas, and consolidated the Air Force Commissary Service along with the Air Force's Civil Engineering Center, regional civil engineers, mortuary services office, and services office. AFESA Commander Maj. Gen. Robert C. Thompson served also as director of engineering and services; AFCOMS Commander Maj. Gen. Daniel L. Burkett served also as AFESA deputy commander. (AFCOMS Annual History, 1977)

JULY 13-15, 1977 THE FAMOUS power blackout in the New York City area necessitated quick reaction to get the emergency generator powered up at the Fort

Support Digest, 1977, p. 23)

THE "AFCOMS Smart Owl," a cartoon logo of a winking owl dressed as a commissary officer,

> went into use in the stores on shelf talkers showing items selling at 15 percent off the usual commissary prices. Later, the Owl also appeared in BDUs driving a forklift (pictured). TSA adopted an almost identical symbol for the same purpose. Because it was unofficially called the "Wise Owl" and closely resembled the Wise Potato Chips

Owl, it was dropped for fear it would imply a product endorsement. (Frank Derby, interview with Dr. Peter D. Skirbunt, 13 Mar 1989)



1978: COMMAND VISIT. Maj. Gen. Daniel L. Burkett, AFCOMS' first commander (left), visited with commissary store officer Ivars Vilnis (right) at the Yokota Air Base, Japan, "Komstore." Also pictured are (second from left) Master Sergeants Ramiro Gardea and Joe Lynch. AFCOMS photo, DeCA historical file, courtesy Daniel L. Burkett

OCT. 1, 1977

A LIMIT of 247 commissaries operating in the continental United States was included as a part of the fiscal 1978 military appropriations bill. (Peter Conrardy, Military Commissaries, p. 11)

OCT. 7, 1977

SENATOR Barry Goldwater (R-Arizona), a major general in the Air Force Reserves, entered into the Congressional Record a special report titled "A Bill of Rights for Those Who Serve," which had been compiled and published by the Association of the United States Army. The report covered every issue of financial concern to active-duty service members, military retirees, and their families. It took to task the trend of a "continuing stream of changes" in military compensation, and warned, "The instability, both real and 'threatened,' in this most basic means by which Americans provide for food, clothing, shelter, and economic security for themselves and their families has created and sustained turmoil, uncertainty, apprehension and mistrust" among military families.

The report also stressed the importance of the "availability of complete commissary/PX systems with continued current level appropriations," and noted, "no single sub-element of the military compensation system should be studied, evaluated or modified without putting it in the context of the entire system. ... Too many of the shortcomings of the present system are due to the piecemeal, uncoordinated changes inflicted in the past in the interest of pure cost avoidance or in response to the whim of influential persons in Congress or the Executive Branch." (Congressional Record, Senate, 7 Oct 1977, pp. 32966-981)

1977

MARCH 1 -

APRIL 8, 1977

Hamilton, New York, commissary. The perishables from the Fort Wadsworth, New York, commissary were later transported to Fort Hamilton. (Troop

SUMMER 1977

PIME FARE

DECEMBER 1977 RESPONDING to a request from Robert Pirie, the assistant secretary of defense for manpower, reserve affairs, and logistics, the military services said they were against the consolidation of commissary operations. Pirie had queried the services regarding consolidation and three alternative forms it could take: an independent agency, overview by the Defense Logistics Agency, and a service acting as executive agent (see entry for April 23, 1978). The services said an independent agency was the only acceptable alternative.

1978

1978

TSA's MIDWEST Region began using boxed beef. (Military Market, Sep 1982)

FEB. 24, 1978

COMPTROLLER General Decision B-188770 ruled that surcharge funds were appropriated funds. This decision (which was later reversed) contradicted previous rulings that held the surcharge funds were non-appropriated. (DeCA historical file)

APRIL 23, 1978

THE DEFENSE Department directed a study to determine improvements to the commissary system. The Tri-Service Study Group conducted the study, which became known as the "DoD Commissary Consolidation Study." It focused on options to the commissary systems, including consolidation under either a joint services commissary store agency or the Defense Logistics Agency. The study was released October 1, 1980. (1978) AFCOMS Annual History, p. 34)

JUNE 1978

CAPT. W. G. CALIMAN JR. became interim commanding officer of the Navy Resale System Office, replacing Rear Adm. E. M. Kocher. (Navy Commissary Program)

JUNE 7, 1978

AFCOMS' Market Basket Survey showed an average customer savings of 24.93 percent. The price

comparisons were conducted at Beale, Bergstrom, Fairchild, Griffiss, March, Minot, Patrick, and Seymour Johnson Air Force Bases. (Military Market, Aug 1978, p. 10)

JULY 1978

NAVY REAR ADM. W. J. Ryan replaced Capt. W. G. Caliman Jr. as commanding officer of NRSO. (Navy Commissary Program)



Rear Adm. W. J. Ryan

AUG. 24, 1978

ARMY BRIG. GEN. Leo A. Brooks took command of the Troop Support Agency. Brooks arrived from Fort Hood.

Texas, where he had commanded the 13th Corps Support Command—the logistics arm of III Corps. His predecessor, Maj. Gen. Emmett W. Bowers, was reassigned as commander, Defense Personnel Support Center, Philadelphia.



Brig. Gen. Leo A. Brooks

OCT. 1, 1978

AFCOMS adopted the IBM 3741 as the agency's pro-

grammable work station. This device automated ordering and receiving in every stateside store's management control center. (1979 AFCOMS Annual History)

OCT. 11, 1978

THE ROTH-STONE Agreement to exempt commissary baggers as government employees was included in the military authorization act. This in effect amended the Fair Labor Standards Act.

OCT. 25, 1978

AFCOMS' Maj. Gen. Daniel L. Burkett was named "Logistician of the Year" by the American Logistics Association.

NOV. 1, 1978

BURKETT retired. Maj. Gen. Charles E. Woods took command of AFCOMS.

DEC. 1, 1978

AFCOMS became, once again, a separate operating agency.



Maj. Gen. Charles E. Woods

1979

JANUARY 1979

THE NAVY Resale System Office conducted a cost-analysis study and determined that increased checkout accuracy could save commissary customers as much as \$30,000 annually, per store. As a result, NRSO decided to install scanning checkout systems in all its stores. (E & C News, March 15, 1981, p. 61)

JAN. 31, 1979

World Events: The return of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to Iran prompted political unrest and fighting in the streets, and forced the abandonment of the TSA commissary in Tehran. (Oral history: Tom Fisher, DeCA historical file)

MARCH 28, 1979

Technology: A major accident took place at the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. While disaster was averted, the accident did major damage to the public's trust in the safety of the plants.

MARCH 29, 1979

A REVISION of OMB Circular A-76 listed commissaries as a function that should be studied for possible contracting out. The Office of Management and Budget mandated that savings of at least 10 percent would have to be projected to justify any change in the existing system.

APRIL 1, 1979

THE DEFENSE Logistics Agency relieved U.S. Army Europe of its mission for peacetime wholesale subsistence support for both troop issue and the commissary system. (Hucles, Haversack, p. 137)

APRIL 29, 1979

AN ARTICLE attacking the commissaries appeared in The Washington Post and described a retired admiral's wife living in an expensive home, shopping at the commissary, buying food subsidized with tax dollars. Congressman Dan Daniel (D-Virginia), chairman of the Non-Appropriated Fund Panel of the House Investigations Subcommittee, refuted the stereotyping in the newspaper article. (E & C News, 15 Jun 1979, pp. 1, 80)

JUNE 1979

THE GENERAL Accounting Office issued a draft report recommending that the secretary of

defense "overcome the military departments' apparent parochialism and direct the timely consolidation of the four separate commissary systems into a single agency." (GAO Report, 1979)

AUG. 1, 1979

THE NAVY Resale System Office (NRSO) was renamed the Navy Resale and Services Support Office (NAVRESSO), reflecting additional services such as textile and uniform research. Rear Adm. W. J. Ryan's title was changed from commanding officer to commander. (Navy Commissary Program, 4; Military Market, Oct 1991, p. 114)

AUG. 21, 1979

THE DEPARTMENT of Defense responded to the draft GAO report attacking the commissaries on three issues: a lack of justification, continuing appropriated fund support, and inadequate improvements in management. Essentially, DoD said that the report contained errors and assumptions, and discounted numerous improvements in commissary management. (E & C News, 15 May 1980, p. 1)



Bill Moran, shown here in 1969 when he was the store officer at Barksdale Air Force Base. Louisiana. DeCA historical file

SEPT. 17, 1979

BILL MORAN, AFCOMS'

director of operations, was

1980s: FORT BLISS, Texas. The new store that opened at Fort Bliss in 1979 consisted of a sales area covering 36,000 square feet and an attached warehouse three times that size. Operations had progressed tremendously from their predecessors; this new warehouse was clean, well-lit, and equipped with multiple bays and numerous forklifts. The new facilities at Fort Bliss inspired the employees, who earned a TSA "Best Store" award in 1982. TSA photo, DeCA historical file

named the Air Force Association's "Civilian of the Year." Moran was also selected "Logistician of the Year" by the American Logistics Association.

AUTUMN 1979

AFCOMS CONTRACTED out shelf-stocking at thirteen commissaries on a trial basis. Soon, contractors at eight of the locations defaulted because they had bid too low and could not do the job. AFCOMS decided to seek new contracts on the eight stores and studied the feasibility of the practice at forty-five more stores. (*E & C News*, 15 Jan 1981, pp. 1, 54)

OCT. 1, 1979

DESPITE COMPUTERS being delivered only thirteen days earlier, the first Marine Corps commissary complex was set up on the West Coast, headquartered at Marine Corps Air Station El Toro, California. (*Military Market*, Oct 1991, pp. 118-20)

NOV. 1, 1979

A NEW variable pricing system went into effect at NAVRESSO commissaries in the United States. Markups on items ranged from 3 to 19 percent, depending upon the item category. The idea was to end frequent price changes. NAVRESSO held that the federal law requiring Army and Air Force stores to charge cost price, plus surcharge, *did not* apply to the Navy. (E & Nens, 15 Jan 1980)

NOV. 4, 1979

World Events: Ninety people, including sixty-six Americans, were taken hostage at the American embassy in Tehran by student followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini. They demanded the return of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, who was undergoing medical treatment in New York City. Thirteen Americans were soon released. The rest remained prisoners until January 1981.

DECEMBER 1979

World Events: The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. About thirty-thousand troops entered the country. Eventually the Soviets would have more than 118,000 troops there.

1980

1980

NAVY COMMISSARIES were stocking an average of thirty-seven hundred line items in the grocery department. (*Navy Commissary Program*, p. 5)

1980

1980

A NAVRESSO reorganization placed commissary activities under the Commissary Operations Group, replacing the Commissary Stores Division. (Military Market, Oct 1991, p. 114)

AFCOMS SURVEYED its active-duty patrons

and found the typical active-duty patron was a married staff or technical sergeant, under thirty years of age, with five to seven years of service. He lived on base and had one or two dependents, including a child twelve years old or less. His family's gross income was less than \$1,500 monthly, of which \$200 to \$300 would be spent on food.

JAN. 9, 1980

PUBLICATION of the GAO report, "Military Commissaries: Justification as Fringe Benefit Needed ... Consolidation Can Reduce Dependence on Appropriations." DoD responded that the GAO proposal that commissaries should be shut down and military pay increased would be counterproductive; the cost to the taxpayer would far exceed the cost of maintaining commissaries. (E & C News, 15 May 1980, pp. 1, 111-12)

MARCH 1980

A STUDY by the Hayes Associates, a firm specializing in conducting studies for the government, concluded that the military perceived commissaries to be the No. 2 benefit behind medical care. (*Hearings*, HASC Readiness Subcommittee, 27 Mar 1984, p. 818)

OCT. 1, 1980

AFTER TWO and one-half years, the DoD Commissary Consolidation Study was completed. Robert J. Pirie, the assistant secretary of defense (manpower, reserve affairs, and logistics) said the services could maintain separate commissary systems, but a merger could be a future consideration. To provide more effective "oversight of the operation of military commissaries," Pirie established a DoD Commissary Executive Board as a policymaking group empowered to set goals, evaluate performance, and provide operational guidance. (ASD/PA news release No. 409-80, "DoD announces decision on status of commissary store systems," 3 Oct 1980)

OCT. 3, 1980

THE MEMBERS of the DoD Commissary Executive Board were announced: Maj. Gen. Dean R. Tice (chairman), deputy assistant secretary of defense for military personnel policy; Paul H. Riley, deputy assistant secretary of defense for supply, maintenance, and transportation; Army Brig .Gen. Leo A. Brooks, TSA; Navy Rear Adm. William J. Ryan, NAVRESSO; Air Force Maj. Gen. Charles E. Woods, AFCOMS; and Marine Brig. Gen. Frank Peterson, USMC Facilities & Services Division.

1981

JANUARY 1981

MAJ. GEN. H. A. Hatch, the Marine Corps

deputy chief of staff for installations and logistics, approved the first phase of a three-year plan to consolidate Marine stores on the East Coast, similar to what existed for West Coast and Pacific stores under the West Coast Complex. (E & C News, 15 Jan 1981, p. 1)

JAN. 20, 1981

World Events: On the last day of President Jimmy Carter's term, the remaining fifty-three American hostages in Iran were freed after more than four hundred days in captivity.



FEBRUARY 1981

THE ARMY and TSA revealed plans to make cost studies on contracting out the management and operational activities in Continental United States commissaries. Plans called for all seventy-two Army CONUS stores to be studied and evaluated for their adaptability to contracting out. The studies would OK shelf stocking, produce and meat processing, checkouts, and the labor for storage and troop issue. These plans were made in response to OMB Circular A-76 from March, 1979. (E & C News, 15 Mar 1981, pp. 1, 18)

FEB. 17, 1981

IN A LETTER to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, the president and chief operating officer of a major food chain said his company would do the contracting-out studies for the Army, and added that it would be interested in obtaining contracts to manage and supply commissaries. (E & C News, 15 Mar 1981, p. 18)

MARCH 1981

GEN. LEW ALLEN, Air Force chief of staff, expressed fears to other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that contracting out the commissaries would lead to "pay as you go" stores, increasing the surcharge to 14-16 percent and effectively negating the benefit. (E & C News, 15 Apr 1981, pp. 1, 84)

MARCH 8, 1981

U.S. History: John Hinckley Jr. shot President Ronald Reagan in Washington, D.C. The president survived the shooting and later recovered.

APRIL 12, 1981

Technology: The U.S. launched the first space shuttle, the *Columbia*.

APRIL 15, 1981

IN A MEETING of the services' commissary systems at the office of Maj. Gen. Thomas U. Greer, management director, Office of the Army Chief of Staff, the Army said it would press ahead with contracting tests at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and Yuma Proving Grounds, Arizona. The Marines were considering contracting out janitorial and custodial, storage and warehouse issue, and shelf stocking. The Air Force was satisfied with its contracts for shelf stocking and janitorial and custodial. The Navy reiterated its plan to turn commissary employees into non-appropriated fund (NAF) personnel. (E & C News, 15 Apr 1981, p. 9, and May 1981, pp. 1, 42)

APRIL 22, 1981

THE GAO reported that DoD cost studies used in contracting out various operations were questionable, and contractors had underestimated costs when bidding. (*E & C News*, 15 Jun 1981, p. 43)

JUNE 1981

ARMY BRIG. GEN. Eugene L. Stillions Jr. replaced Brig. Gen. Leo A. Brooks as commander of TSA.

JUNE 1, 1981

THE FIRST contingency operations and Prime RIBS (readiness in base services) course under AFCOMS began at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. (1981 AFCOMS Annual History)

JUNE 1, 1981

AFCOMS HIRED its first local national store manager: Vicente Diaz, of the Torrejon, Spain, commissary. Diaz had worked there since 1956.

JUNE 3, 1981

A PRICE comparison survey conducted at eight

widely separated, randomly selected Air Force commissaries in the continental United States showed the average savings were 26.36 percent. (AFCOMS History, 1981, p. 18)

JULY 1981

REAR ADM. D. E. Wilson replaced Rear Adm. William J. Ryan as commander of NAVRESSO. (Navy Commissary Program)

JULY 2, 1981

NAVRESSO Headquarters, located in Brooklyn since July 1946, began its move to Fort Wadsworth, Staten Island, New York. The old headquarters building had been declared structurally unsound. The relocation would be completed by January 1982 (Navy Commissary Program, p. 5; 50 years of Serving You, pp. 33-34; Military Market, Oct 1991, p. 114)

JULY 6, 1981

World History: Israeli warplanes destroyed a nuclear reactor in Iraq.

JULY 8, 1981

CONGRESS RECEIVED a comptroller general's report on the operation of contractor-operated base stores for vehicle repair parts and civil engineering supplies. The report stated the stores were "plagued by pricing irregularities, contract abuses, and repeated allegations of fraud." The report cited problems that could also affect contractor-operated commissaries. (General Accounting Office, Comptroller General's Report to the Congress of the United States, Military Contractor-Operated Stores' Contracts Are Unmanageable and Vulnerable to Abuse. Publication MASAD-81-27, 8 Jul 1981)

JULY 21, 1981

THE HOMESTEAD Air Force Base, Florida, commissary was the first Air Force store to begin scanning. The stores of AFCOMS' South Florida Complex (Patrick and MacDill Air Force Bases being the others) were the pilots for the experimental program. Scanning quickly became a big success. The South Florida program paved the way

for full implementation of scanning throughout AFCOMS. (Military Market, Oct 1982, p. 28)

AUG. 22, 1981

Technology: IBM released the first personal computer, the IBM PC. This computer came equipped with 16 kilobytes of memory, expandable to 256 KB.

AUG. 28, 1981

JAPAN EMBARGOED all California produce because of a Mediterranean Fruit Fly infestation plaguing the state.



1983: McCONNELL Air Force Base, Kansas. This store, originally built as a warehouse in 1952, was converted to a commissary by January 1977. The unusual décor was meant to dress up the old warehouse. It had ten checkouts, a delicatessen, and a bakery. It operated as a commissary until 1997, when a new facility opened on base. AFCOMS photo, DeCA historical file

1982

1982

AT THIS TIME, four Navy stores sold tobacco and soft drinks, (Interview, Linda Lewis, DeCA/DO, with Dr. Peter D. Skirbunt, Oct 2004)

1982

AN ARMY task force on commissaries, formed to study vendor problems in Europe, concluded that the problems were symptomatic of larger troubles in organizational and systems support. The task force recommended a reorganization to narrow the span of control, extend the existing data-processing system to support store-level processing, and use a management consulting firm to review the entire commissary system. As a result, the firm of Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co. of Washington, D.C., was retained to conduct the study. (Peat, Marwick, and Mitchell, I.2)

FEB. 1, 1982

MAJ. GEN. Charles E. Woods retired. Maj. Gen. George C. Lynch assumed command of the Air Force Commissary Service.

JULY 27, 1982

Science: The term AIDS ("acquired immune deficiency syndrome") is used for the first time. By 1983, French scientists from the Pasteur Institute

LATE 1980s: BERMUDA. The American military presence in Bermuda began during World War II, when the Unitd States took over British bases in the Atlantic. The deal gave the United States more control over its own defense while providing Great Britain with ships. The commissary pictured here was built in 1961, and closed in 1995 when the United States pulled out of the naval air station. NAVRESSO photo, DeCA historical file

identified the HIV virus.

ECEMBER 1982

PEAT, MARWICK, Mitchell & Co. studied the Army's European Commissary Region. (Peat, I.2)

NOV. 22, 1982

THE NAVRESSO advisory committee agreed to test the sale of cigarettes and soda (soft drinks) at Naval Station Charleston and Naval Weapons Station Charleston in South Carolina. At the time, the only Navy commissary store that sold both tobacco and soda was the Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, store, which showed cigarette sales in fiscal 1982 of \$1,565,510 and \$1,025,144 for soda. This was, respectively, 5.3 and 3.4 percent of the store's total sales. (NRS Navy Commissary Operations Group Newsletter, 31 Jan 1983, p. 6)

1983

1983

THE NAVY introduced a frequent delivery system (FDS) to its stores in San Diego. (Navy Resale Update, Oct 1988, p. 6)

JAN. 12, 1983

AN AFCOMS Market Basket Survey showed an average customer savings of 26.29 percent. (1983 AFCOMS History, p. 17)

JANUARY -APRIL 1983 **PEAT, MARWICK,** Mitchell & Co. studied the Army's stateside commissary regions. (Peat, I.2)



1983: BARBADOS. This was the tactical field exchange (TFE) set up by Air Force Commissary Service for troops going to, and returning from, the invasion of Grenada. Lessons learned during this operation helped AFCOMS prepare for future deployments, and were especially helpful during Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990-91.

AFCOMS photo. DeCA historical file

APRIL 1, 1983

BY DIRECTION of the secretary of defense, the commissary surcharge for all services was increased from 4 to 5 percent.

APRIL 30, 1983

THE "REPORT on Army Commissary System" by Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co. of Washington, D.C., made multiple recommendations for improvement, including: using an integrated information system to support all levels of management; reducing the duties of commissary officers, while allowing them more time to address customer needs; consolidating the administration of some commissary functions; using management indicators of performance; centralizing product and price negotiations at region level; adopting a district concept (similar to AFCOMS and USMC commissary complexes); strengthening internal control procedures; and streamlining the regions by surrendering some powers to the headquarters. ("Report on the Worldwide U.S. Army Commissary System," 30 Apr 1983)

APRIL - MAY 1983

NAVY RESALE System News Digest began publishing every two months. (NRS News Digest, Apr 1986, p. 12)

JUNE 1983

A COUNCIL-HOUSE research study concluded that commissaries were second in importance only to the medical benefit (*Hearings*, HASC Readiness Subcommittee, 27 Mar 1984, p. 818)

JUNE 30, 1983

INITIAL REPORT of the President's Private Sector Survey on Cost Control (The Grace Commission) was released. The commission recommended that either CONUS commissaries be run by private industry, or that they be closed.

JULY 1983

AN A-76 BLUE Ribbon Group Conference in Washington, D.C., that included the heads of the commissary agencies, examined the feasibility of contracting out certain commissary operations, and initiated studies of seven custodial and shelf-stocking operations and four resale warehouse operations. This was done in response to the Air Force's announced plans to conduct formal functional reviews that would result in new manpower standards and possible losses of existing authorizations. (1983 AFCOMS History)

JULY 12, 1983

THE YEAR'S second AFCOMS Market Basket Survey showed an average customer savings of

Busy, Busy, Busy: Serving Multitudes at Belvoir



FTER ITS GRAND OPENING In 1982, The Fort Belvoir, Virginia, store was the Troop Support Agency's biggest and busiest. Among all commissaries, worldwide, it was often No. 1 in annual sales, and usually competed with the Air Force Commissary Service's McChord Air Force Base,

Washington, store for that distinction. As the upper left photo shows, single soldiers were already a focus of attention, long before DeCA reemphasized the concept two decades later. TSA photos in DeCA historical file



26.08 percent. (1983 AFCOMS History, p. 17)

SEPTEMBER 1983 ARMY LT. GEN. Dean R. Tice, deputy assistant secretary of defense for military personnel and force management, believed commissaries should be viewed as a part of the military's total compensation package. (Military Market, Sep 1983, p. 37)

SEPTEMBER 1983 RETIRED AIR FORCE Maj. Gen. Daniel Burkett said the latest call for privatization was "another of the many cases we have been subjected to in the past in which a 'study' group begins with a predetermined conclusion, then attempts to justify that conclusion with distorted facts and amateurish analysis." Burkett called the Grace Commission report a "very biased and unprofessional analysis." (Military Market, Sep 1983, p. 14)

OCTOBER 1983

AFCOMS PURCHASED \$7 million in war reserve materiels, including items such as Meals Ready to Eat (MREs).

OCT. 6, 1983

THE TROOP Support Agency entered into a contract for the operation of the front end, grocery, meat, produce and warehouse functions of the commissary at Yuma Proving Grounds, Arizona, with Unisery, Inc., of Long Beach, California. The contract was to run from December 1, 1983, through September 30, 1984. (Troop Support Digest, Winter 1984)

OCT. 23, 1983

International Terrorism: A suicide bomber driving a truck exploded a bomb at the U.S. Marine Barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 242 Americans and wounding 100. Another bomb exploded at the nearby French compound, killing fifty-eight French troops.

OCT. 25, 1983

U.S. Military History: U.S. invasion of Grenada (Operation Urgent Fury). U.S. Marines, Army Rangers, and forces from six Caribbean nations invaded the island of Grenada in response to a request for assistance from the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States.

NOVEMBER 1983

THE AIR FORCE Commissary Service and the Army and Air Force Exchange Service set up a joint tactical field exchange at Grantly Adams Airport, Barbados, and the Grenada TFE at Point Salines Airport, Grenada. The AFCOMS team was led by Tech Sgt. Howard E. Lucas Jr. The Air Force agency had four people present in Barbados (November 3-23), from where the U.S. invasion of Grenada had been staged. (Military Market, Apr 1986, p. 21; AFCOMS Marketer, Dec 1983, pp. 2-3)

DEC. 1, 1983

THE ARMY BEGAN conducting an A-76 analysis study at commissaries at Yuma Proving Ground, Arizona, (see entry for Oct 6, 1983) and Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, to determine if prvate contractors could run stores. At Fort Leonard Wood, a contract never went into effect because the bids exceeded the costs of running the store in-house; a contract did go into effect at Yuma on December 1 but ended unsuccessfully ten months later. (E & C News, Jan 1988, p. 23, Gen. Lukeman testimony) The operation proved that some portions of the commissary could not be contracted out. (Military Market, May 1984, pp. 30-31)

ECEMBER 1983 AFCOMS CONTRACTED with NCR to install scanners in 120 stores by 1992. (Military Market, Apr 1986, p. 10)

1983 - 1984

THE CONGRESSIONAL Budget Office reported that "the loss of commissary benefits would have an impact on military retention. (Hearings, HASC Readiness Subcommittee, 27 Mar 1984, p. 809)

1984

JAN. 6, 1984

ARMY BRIG. GEN. James S. Hayes replaced Brig. Gen. Eugene L. Stillions Jr. as TSA commander.

JAN. 12, 1984

THE GRACE Commission Report reiterated that CONUS commissaries should be run by private industry or closed.

MARCH 27-28. 1984

HEARINGS by the HASC Readiness Subcommittee examined the Grace Commission Report as it pertained to commissaries. The congressmen shredded the report on numerous errors in assumption, fact, and methodology.

Lawrence J. Korb, assistant secretary of defense for manpower, installations, and logistics, testified on the commissary being part of the total compensation package; privatization; the commissaries being perceived as the second-most-important benefit (p. 818); and the cost to the taxpayer of paying active-duty military and retirees in dollars rather than with a commissary subsidy (p. 821). (Commissary Hearings on Grace Commission Recommendations, HASC Readiness Subcommittee, 27-28 Mar 1984; also, see Military Market, May 1984, pp. 24-29)

SEPT. 28, 1984

BRIG. GEN. M. Gary Alkire assumed command of AFCOMS, replacing Maj. Gen. George Lynch, who retired. Alkire was promoted to major general on January 31, 1985.

NOV. 6 -DEC. 7, 1984

PENN & SCHOEN conducted a commissary price-comparison survey, directed by the House Armed Services Committee. TSA acted as agent for the military services in issuing the contract for this survey, which examined patron savings at commissaries in CONUS. The survey included 24 Air Force locations, 16 Army, 8 Navy, and 2 Marine; results showed a 25.02-percent patron savings at Air Force stores, and 24.74 percent throughout the armed services. Comparison with civilian warehouse stores showed a better selection and

a savings of 15.63 percent at the commissaries.

1985

1985

THE NAVY introduced frequent delivery to its central distribution center in Newport, Rhode Island. This CDC began shipments to Naval Station Argentia, Newfoundland, three times monthly, via the government contract carrier.

1985

AFTER REVIEWING the Grace Commission Report and holding lengthy hearings throughout 1984, Congress discounted its recommendations regarding commissaries and instructed the services to continue their commissary operations. Congress thus rejected commissary privatization.

1985

NAVY COMMISSARIES employed more than thirty-seven hundred civilian and military personnel. Like the Army and Air Force, they now charged a 5percent surcharge to cover non-labor costs. The Navy stores claimed a 24-percent patron savings. (Navy Resale System Annual Review, 1985)

1985

CHANGE in the Navy chain of command: A resale ROIC (resale officer-in-charge) became responsible for the day-to-day base operations of exchanges and commissaries. The ROICs reported both to NAVRESSO and to the local base commander. (Navy Resale System, p. 2; Military Market, Oct 1991, p. 114)

JANUARY -**MARCH 1985** AFCOMS BEGAN its first "Wee-Serv" in conjunction with the opening of a new store at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. In March, AFCOMS began its automated shelf-space management program. (1985 AFCOMS History)

MAY 26, 1985

TSA SIGNED a contract with NCR corporation to get seventy-one of its stores online, with scan-



ning by the end of 1986. (Military Market, Apr 1986, p.10)

AUG. 8, 1985

International Terrorism: A car bomb exploded on Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany, near Frankfurt. Two Americans were killed and twenty other Americans and Germans were wounded.

NOV. 24, 1985

International Terrorism: A car bomb exploded in the parking lot next to the Frankfurt, Germany, post exchange shopping mall. Some thirty-five people were

wounded, all but two of whom were Americans. This event underlined the vulnerability of exchanges and commissaries to terrorism.

(Military Market, Jan 1986, p. 170)

DECEMBER 1985 CONGRESS DIRECTED DoD to study the effects of tobacco and alcohol on military readiness and family life. (Military Market, Feb 1986, p. 13)

DEC. 11, 1985

Politics/Budget: Congress passed a compromise Gramm-Rudman Bill to try to end the federal deficit and achieve a balanced budget by 1991.

1986

1986

THE JOINT Service Commissary Committee became active.

JAN. 28, 1986

U.S. History/Technology: The space shuttle Challenger exploded during its ascent into space, killing all seven crew members.

FEBRUARY 1986

AN AGREEMENT between AAFES, AFCOMS, and TSA allowed U.S.-produced soft drinks to be sold exclusively in European commissaries for the first time. (Military Market, Feb 1986, p. 10)

FEBRUARY 1986

THE AMERICAN Lung Association wrote to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, urging him to hike cigarette prices in the commissaries and exchanges. (Military Market, Feb 1986, p. 13)

FEB. 4, 1986

AAFES BEGAN a test to stock U.S. pork and beef in European commissaries. (AFCOMS historical file, 1986-87, viii)

FEB. 20-25, 1986 COMMISSARIES at Beale, Mather, and McClellan Air Force bases in California supplied food and other items to seven thousand evacuees from the flooding



Yuba River. (AFCOMS historical records, 1986)

MARCH 1986

THE GRAMM-Rudman-Hollings Bill, intended to balance the federal budget, caused funding cuts that threatened commissary operations. At the very least, it appeared that operating hours were going to be trimmed. Other possible ways to cut costs included deferring construction and renovation projects and reducing customer-research surveys (Military Market, Mar 1986, pp. 5, 15-16; Apr 1986, p. 8)

MARCH 1986

IN A COMPROMISE to an emotional issue, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger allowed cigarettes to remain on sale in the commissaries, but ordered DoD to carry out a tough anti-smoking campaign. (Military Market, Mar 1986, p. 38)

MARCH 1986

AFCOMS CONSIDERED obtaining 200 million pounds of surplus beef, veal, and pork for either inexpensive sale or for giving it away to customers in Europe. Ultimately, AFCOMS decided to give it away. (Military Market, Apr 1986, p. 10; May, p. 7; AFCOMS historical files)

MARCH 1, 1986

AFCOMS BEGAN tying its Automated Commissary Operating System network into commissaries worldwide after its installation at the Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, store. (Military Market, Mar 1986, p. 38)

APRIL 15, 1986

U.S. Military History: U.S. planes attacked Libya in response to its state support of terrorism.

APRIL 26, 1986

World Events/Technology: The Chernobyl nuclear reactor exploded in the Soviet Ukraine. The initial death toll was listed at thirty-one. The Ukraine has since estimated the number of deaths among

"When You're on the Dock, Wondering Where's Your Stock, Who Do You Call? NIS Busters!"

EEPING SHELVES fully stocked was a big priority for Brig. Gen. James S. Hayes, commander, Troop Support Agency, in 1985. In response, TSA's Midwest Region (MWCOR) set a goal of increasing sales by 5 percent by eliminating the perennial not-in-stock (NIS) problem.

NIS's were serious problems, since customers consistently seeing empty shelves would get discouraged and disgusted, and would eventually go to other stores to find what they needed. However, getting the message out to people at the stores could prove difficult if they were approached with a standard marketing campaign. It had to be something catchy, something people would remember.

To publicize and encourage the effort in a different, enjoyable way, the region's deputy director, Ron Renaud, conceived an idea that developed into a full-fledged awareness campaign for its employees. Renaud's idea was a takeoff on 1984's smash-hit movie, Ghostbusters, but his version was called NIS Busters. It featured articles, T-shirts, caps, buttons, a slide show, promotional packages for each Midwest store, personal NIS Buster appearances, and even a song.

The theme proved so catchy and enjoyable that it soon caught on throughout the region and in other TSA stores as well. The campaign was the first in a series of promotions that were aimed at increasing sales and lowering costs. Pictured here, wearing costumes and carrying equipment based on those used in the movie (although the NIS Busting "weapons" were strangely reminiscent of price



guns and their "particle accelerator" looked suspiciously like a vacuum cleaner hose) are Sarah Saunders of MWCOR's contracting division; Greg McGruder, Fort Sam Houston commissary store officer; and Bryan Roukey, Fort Bliss commissary store officer. Photo: Army Times Publications

AUG. 1, 1986

cleanup workers alone around eight thousand.

AFCOMS' MILITARY commissary managers were permitted to wear the distinctive red coat effective this date. This decision was intended to help customers by making the commissary officer easy to find. (AFCOMS Historical Records, 1986)

SEPTEMBER 1986 THE MWR Panel of the House Armed Services Committee gave commissaries permission to stock women's hosiery, household batteries, and pet supplies. (Military Market, Nov 1986, p. 6)

NOVEMBER 1986

THE FIRST shipment of USDA beef was delivered to Europe. (Military Market, Oct 1991, p. 118)

NOV. 17, 1986

CONGRESS ALLOWED members of the Guard and Reserve twelve commissary shopping trips per year. This was in addition to unlimited shopping privileges while they were on their two weeks' annual active duty.

1986 - 1987

THE MARINE CORPS commissary system

became the first to implement electronic ordering, invoicing, and funds transfer. (Military Market, Oct 1991, p. 134)

1987

1987

BY THE TIME Rear Adm. Donald Wilson retired, NAVRESSO had began several successful business strategies that reduced interest payments by 90 percent, captured 94 percent of available cash discounts, and accumulated \$6 million in additional funds, which went toward upgrading the stores and building new ones. Line items had doubled, and store hours increased by almost four hours per store per week. Sales increased by 20 percent. (News Digest, Sep/Oct 1987, p. 12)

THE PRESIDENT'S Commission on Privat-

THE MARINE CORPS implemented the

Enhanced Commissary Management Information

System. (Military Market, Oct 1991, p. 134)

ization, while considering commissary privatization once again, dropped the notion after reviewing the historical record and the operation of com-

1987

1987

missaries. (AFCOMS historical records, 1987)

APRIL 1987

IN ITS REVIEW of the 1988 defense spending bill, the House Armed Services Committee found that no further studies were needed on commissary consolidation. (E & C News, Sep 2002, p. 28)

MAY 7, 1987

NAVRESSO and the Coast Guard signed an inter-service support agreement for the Navy to provide logistic, administrative, and financial support to Coast Guard commissary and exchange locations. NAVRESSO'S central distribution center at Newport, Rhode Island, started shipping line items and transshipping frequent delivery products. The Navy also assumed management of the Coast Guard commissary on Governors Island, New York. (NRS News Digest, Jul/Aug 1987)

JULY 10, 1987

REAR ADM. Rodney K. Squibb replaced Rear Adm. Donald Wilson as commander of NAVRES-SO. (NRS News Digest, Sep/Oct 1987)

SEPT. 2, 1987

THE PRIVATIZATION issue was revived with the appointment of twelve people to the President's Commission on Privatization.

SEPT. 27, 1987

A BOMB EXPLODED outside the Air Force commissary in downtown Athens, Greece, while a second bomb was discovered and defused by Greek authorities. No one was injured, and there was no major damage. (AFCOMS historical records, 1987)

OCT. 19, 1987

World History/Economics: The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 508.32 and closed at a record-breaking low of 1,738.40 points. Known as "Black Monday," the 22.9-percent loss almost doubled the percentage lost in the Crash of 1929.

DEC. 22, 1987

IN A PUBLIC hearing, the President's Commission on Privatization heard testimony from DoD, the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regarding the privatization of commissaries. OMB Associate Director L. Wayne Arny said the contracting-out test would show if privatization was better than the current system. (E & C News, 15 Jan 1988, pp. 1, 18, 23, 68)

1988

JAN. 23, 1988

REP. Dan Daniel (D-Virginia) died. He was the chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, a longtime champion of the commissaries.

MAY 6, 1988

GROUNDBREAKING for the new Troop Support Agency headquarters building began at Fort Lee, Virginia. This structure was TSA's last home before becoming DeCA headquarters in October 1991. (TSA historical records, 1988)

SEPT. 29, 1988

MARINE LT. GEN. Anthony Lukeman, deputy assistant secretary for military manpower and personnel policy; Maj. Gen. M. Gary Alkire (AFCOMS); Rear Adm. Rodney K. Squibb (NAVRESSO); Brig. Gen. James S. Hayes (TSA); and Brig. Gen. Michael Downs, (USMC facilities & services division) were among witnesses defending commissaries at the HASC Subcommittee on Readiness's MWR Panel hearing. (AFCOMS Historical Records, 1988; E & C News, 15 Nov 1988)

OCTOBER 1988

NAVRESSO's frequent-delivery system had grown to encompass forty-one stores in the continental United States and seven overseas, (Navy Resale Update, Oct 1988, p. 6)

DEC. 13, 1988

REP. William "Bill" Nichols died. A staunch defender of the commissary benefit, Nichols had been a member of the House Armed Services Committee since 1968. He served as the chairman of its panel on non-appropriated funds, and of the panel on commissaries and exchanges.

DEC. 21, 1988

International Terrorism: Pan Am Flight 103 exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all 259 aboard and another 11 people in the town.



1987: CLOSED-CIRCUIT television (shown here at Clark Air Force Base, the Philippines). This program was launched because of increased theft at several Air Force commissaries. AFCOMS photo, DeCA historical file





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